



The European Union's Rapid Reaction Mechanism Programme

# Technical Assistance to the National Dialogue Process in **Timor-Leste**

*Rethinking Timorese Identity as a  
Peacebuilding Strategy:  
The Lorosa'e – Loromonu Conflict  
from a Traditional Perspective*

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Dili, Timor-Leste  
6th June 2007



This project is funded by  
the EUROPEAN UNION



A project implemented by  
DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FUER  
TECHNISCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT (GTZ)



## Executive Summary

Since 2006 East Timor, the world's youngest nation has been faced with a crisis of internal conflict. During the course of the past year a deepening regional and social division has become tangible (and violent on a larger scale) for the first time since independence. This conflict or division was defined by animosities, distrust and eventually street fights between people considered to be either of *Lorosa'e* (Eastern) or *Loromonu* (Western) region and background. Violence erupted out of widespread perceptions that discrimination against such regional groupings permeated state institutions, particularly in the security sector. From here unrest spread and led to the large-scale displacement of parts of the population that is still ongoing.

The most significant damage caused by this crisis was to the internal relationships that had until then bound the country together. This damage still threatens relations between the institutions of governance and those that they govern, as well as interpersonal relationships. The legacy of a failure to adequately address and transform the current situation will be fear and mistrust, providing fertile ground for future conflict in East Timor and hindering the processes of nation-building often considered to have been successful up until the crisis. What has been neglected though is that - while the economic indicators were positive - less tangible processes of cultural transformation and identity politics, in particular the (non-)formation of a shared national identity, were given little consideration and effort thus far.

Meanwhile recent government-sponsored dialogue and peace-making initiatives by international actors present in East Timor have shown little impact on the sentiments and root causes underlying the eruption of violence last year. In particular, there has been little effect on countering the trend of a deepening social divide between *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* that is evolving into a kind of 'ethnic polarisation' of regional and social distinctions, which - though historically developed during colonial times and surfacing at different moments in-between - had previously not been violent on any large scale. The study set out to explore why any measures tried until now to address and resolve the conflict and transform sentiments have not worked well. Many causal factors - political, economic, and legal - have been mentioned in previous research, but one facet has remained underexplored: gaining a deeper understanding of local cultural understandings and views of the crisis as well as local ideas for processes of resolution and long-term transformation. At the core of the *Lorosa'e* - *Loromonu* conflict, respondents stated, is a fundamental discord that pinpoints some of the faultlines present in current processes of social change in East Timor since independence. Such faultlines refer to the fluidity and tension between modern-traditional; urban-rural; elder-youth; migrant-local; and not least between the world views and values at stake. For instance, much of the rural population finds that at the core of the new regional conflict is an imbalance between the physical-material and the spiritual-ancestral worlds. Hence, the study describes in detail some of the local ideas and conceptions of conflict as well as enduring, age-old structures and practices of conflict management, resolution and prevention in East Timor.

Based on the ideas of respondents in seven districts and an appraisal of two recent peace initiatives in Dili, the study then proposes the careful and considerate use of traditional Timorese concepts and practices such as *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* [a traditional dialogue process] and *Juramentu* [a blood oath to seal a settlement or agreement] in future peace processes aimed at transforming the *Lorosa'e* - *Loromonu* conflict in the long-term.



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## **Abbreviations**

**AD:** Alianca Demokratika

**CAVR:** (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation)

**CRP:** Community Reconciliation Process

**F-FDTL:** Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste

**FRETILIN:** Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente

**ICG:** International Crisis Group

**IDPs:** Internally Displaced Persons

**IOM:** International Organization for Migration

**KOTA:** Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain

**PDF:** Peace and Democracy Foundation

**PNTL:** Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (National Police of Timor-Leste)

**PPT:** Partido Povu Timor

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Program



## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to the countless individuals who have supported this study and provided recommendations and input. We are grateful to Ms. Vanesa Pruller, who provided valuable assistance during this study and to Mr. Ben Larke for his advice and suggestions. We would like to express our deep appreciation to GTZ-IS and EU Commission of East Timor who provided us the opportunity to complete this study. We also would like to thank the MTRC for the work on this very interesting and rewarding project. We would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the comments and inputs of Dr. U. Weyl and Dr. P. Ferguson and the extensive editorial advice of Dr. U. Whande.

We also appreciate contributions from: Maria Cristiana Carrascalao, Fidelis Magalhaes, Christopher Suttentfield, Miad Jamali and Vafa Ghazavi

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*Interview with Dato, Viqueque, April 2007*

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## 1. Introduction

*'Ida ne mak ita nia avo sira hanorin hela mai ita: Hori uluk horiwain, rai ulun rai ikun, tasi feti tasi mane, mesak feton nia deit nan nian deit. Ita ne la seluk la let ida. Horiseik hori bain ruak, ita hamutuk knuak ida, sei diak. Ita ne nungka fahe malu no haketak malu, buat ida dehan Lorosa'e Loromonu. ITA NE'E IDA DEIT!'*

*(Lian Nain, Ainaro, April 2007)*

'This is what our ancestor passed down to us: Since the beginning of time, people from the East, West, North and South are all children of one brother and sister. We are one; we are not foreign to each other. Yesterday and the day before, we were still together in one Sacred house (Uma Lulik). All good! We never divide ourselves or separate each other as in *Lorosae – Loromonu*. WE ARE ONE PEOPLE!' *(Lian Nain, Ainaro, April 2007)*

In 2002 the dream that had inspired thousands of East Timorese to armed struggle became a reality: East Timor became a sovereign nation. The world admired the fledgling nation's peoples for their sacrifices and persistence, making independence a reality after centuries of Portuguese rule and Indonesian occupation. The United Nations was congratulated for services rendered and for facilitating the successful transition of East Timor to statehood. But in the wake of recent violence from April to June 2006, the hopes of tranquillity and triumph have been shattered. The conflict erupted after the dismissal of members of the national army who had claimed discrimination based on their origins – they were considered *Loromonu* or 'westerners' while those they claimed received better terms and conditions were considered *Lorosa'e* or 'easterners'. The Government's response to the soldiers, who were later called 'the petitioners', was miscalculated. Instead of engaging with their stated grievances, the government dismissed them, which catalysed a spectrum of popular dissatisfaction and personal (recent) conflict histories and ended in escalation of street violence and chaos. The violence led to the disintegration of the army and police force, a collapse of law and order, the deaths of thirty-eight people and rampant looting and destruction by armed gangs claiming various political affiliations. As the conflict escalated, a communal fear gripped the population and mutual hostility developed based on perceptions of regional division between East Timorese coming from the western region (*Loromonu*) and those from the eastern region (*Lorosa'e*). About 1000 houses were burned and – indicative of the levels of fear and the gravity of East Timor's historical experiences of violence - 175,000 people fled their homes. Even after relative stability was restored by a contingent of international forces, the societal fissure between the two regional groupings has deepened and continues to be associated with violence and animosity.

As a nation East Timor now faces a crisis of protracted internal conflict with the ongoing displacement of large parts of the population in the urban area of the capital Dili and into the countryside. The most significant damage caused by this crisis is to the internal relationships that have until now bound the country together. This damage threatens the relations between the institutions of governance and those they govern as well as interpersonal relationships. If the situation is left to continue it is likely to have long-term implications impeding East Timor's development as a nation still in its infancy. The legacy of not engaging with the ongoing crisis will be one of fear and mistrust providing fertile ground for future civil conflict in a context of grave developmental challenges.

The interpretation of the crisis as based on a regional tension, in particular between 'east' and 'west' and between 'easterners'/*Lorosa'e* and 'westerners'/*Loromonu* as two separate entities, has caused numerous questions to be asked - about the fissure's origins, its impact on social dynamics and possibilities of overcoming the divisions. In response, the study set out to capture a spectrum of local understandings and views of why the sense of animosity and grievance between *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* that emerged during last year's conflict exists and persists.



## 1.1 Objectives

Based on the intersection of modern and traditional practices of governance and conflict management in East Timor, the study examines indigenous customary concepts and practices specific to the East Timorese context. The study

- explores traditional peace mechanisms that have developed historically and encompass Timorese culture, perceptions and values;
- identifies guiding principles for the facilitation of a successful post-crisis peace process based on traditional concepts and practices;
- appraises recent Government peace initiatives and programs; and
- outlines recommendations for a National Peace Process as a long-term conflict prevention mechanism that is rooted in shared East Timorese traditions.

## 1.2 Approach, Methodology and Format

The study presumes that in order to transform the current crisis in East Timor, there is a need to find conflict resolution approaches that are well-understood and accessible to all East Timorese people. Coming from a history of foreign domination, it is critical that ordinary people accept and own any peace process, that it makes sense to them and is considered culturally appropriate and acceptable. Following this line of thought, the study set out to explore which customary values, beliefs and practices used to address conflict and build peace, are still centrally important and accepted by the majority of people. Finding that much strength of local dispute resolution processes originates from the fact that there is a spiritual authority involved (that is above the disputes and struggles of the world) the research process then went more deeply into exploring traditional world views and local conceptions of conflict and its resolution.

Some of the ideas central to the conception of the study were outlined in 'An Open Letter to the Prime Minister and to the Timorese People<sup>3</sup>' and 'Jura Povu Timor<sup>4</sup>' by Josh Trindade. They were also discussed further with the Prime Minister and with the Chief of Staff of President's Office in late 2006, both of whom provided support and valuable feedback to the ideas and their development

Methodologically, the study was based on a literature review and 60 days of qualitative field research conducted in Dili and seven other districts of East Timor. The research process had three distinct phases:

The first phase of the study was conducted within Dili starting with a literature review of existing anthropological, conflict and sociological material. During the qualitative data collection that followed, the research team allowed for the free expression of ideas and candid discussion starting from a set of questions (see Annex). In total, 53 interviews were conducted with people representing a range of professions, social status and local knowledge. Some of the individuals interviewed were selected randomly by the study team; others were selected based on recommendations from interviewees and other people. They included former and current government officials, Parliament members and political leaders, traditional leaders (*Lia Nain*, *Liurai*, and *Dato*), *Chefe de Sucos* [local government leaders], Timorese intellectuals representing different fields, lawyers, peace activist, NGO staff, IDPs, students, youth and women representatives. Interviews were conducted in English, Bahasa Indonesian, Tetum or Portuguese.

The second phase expanded the geographic and participant scope of primary data collected during the first phase of the study. Interviews and open discussion were conducted with traditional leaders, government officials, IDPs and youth in the Eastern districts of Viqueque, Baucau, Los Palos, and the Western districts of Alieu, Ainaro, Covalima and Bobonaro.

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<sup>3</sup> ETAN Mailing List, August 2006

<sup>4</sup> At: [www.etan.org/etanpdf/2006/jura%20povu%20timor.pdf](http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/2006/jura%20povu%20timor.pdf)



The final phase involved compilation and analysis of field data and a feedback seminar with different NGOs such as, *Belun*, MTRC, UNDP, Interpeace, PDF, Care and ICG and other stakeholders currently working on conflict resolution. The recommendations for future peace initiatives were consolidated based on the study's findings and analysis.

In addition, the research team was also asked to provide an appraisal of current government peace initiatives, focussing on the use of traditional practices in processes aimed at mitigating the recent crisis. The following steps were taken to assess the government's Simu Malu (literally 'accept/understand each other') Program and the Low Level National Dialogue in this respect:

- Primary research was based on interviews with Simu Malu and National Dialogue implementing staff, IDPs (people living in internally displaced person camps) and other interview participants in the districts.
- During the study period, both Simu Malu program and Low Level National Dialogue had not yet produced any report, so the research was based on the few documents produced earlier, such as the original concept paper and dialogue methodology. The study team was also using the Simu Malu Bulletin Edition 1-10, published between January-April 2007.

The main indicators to measure the success of Simu Malu and Low Level National Dialogue's use of customary practices are as follows:

- *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict resolved and its future recurrence prevented
- Social relationship between *Lorosa'e and Loromonu* re-established
- Animosity and distrust between *Lorosa'e and Loromonu* removed
- Majority of IDPs returned to their homes

## 1.3 Structure

The study starts with an Introduction (Chapter 1) and background information to the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict, its root causes and historical background (Chapter 2) and views of the crisis from a 'modern' and a traditional perspective (Chapter 3). Based on the importance of traditional cultural practices in East Timor, we then proceed to sketch traditional understandings and community structures (Chapter 4). Next we explore traditional practices of conflict management in East Timor (Chapter 5) and the impact, value and limitations of these practices in relation to the current social changes and the conflict (Chapter 6). We then proceed to a Rapid Appraisal of Recent Peace Initiatives with regards to the use of traditional mechanisms of conflict management (Chapter 7) and based on the outcomes of this appraisal propose a new peace process using traditional mechanisms to build peace among *Lorosa'e and Loromonu*.

## 1.4 Limitations of Study

The study faced a number of limitations:

Geographical Terrain: the number of district level interviews required the team to cover considerable distances and rough terrain, and it prevented the implementation of a national-level feedback seminar. It had been envisioned that - upon consolidating the research data - a seminar would be organized inviting all study participants to showcase results and afford them the opportunity to provide feedback. However, due to the limitations of time and travel costs, the seminar was replaced by a half day final consultation in Dili with different NGO and other stakeholders currently working in conflict resolution area.



**Information Availability:** Documentation and follow-up reports for the appraisal of Simu Malu, the National Dialogue and other peace programs were very limited in content or non-existent. Analysis therefore relied heavily on testimonials from event organizers, a limited number of participants and community member observations. This had a direct impact on the ability to carry out comprehensive evaluations and make detailed conclusions.

**Scope of Participants:** Due to the geographic spread of interview participants, ranging from the eastern to western parts of the country and the rough terrain in some regions, the scope of interview participants was limited. The identification and accessibility of traditional leaders also posed another challenging constraint that limited the range of interviews. The study team found that some of the interviewees envisioned, especially the traditional leaders had gone to work on their farms. The study team at times had to travel by foot to their farms to conduct the interviews.

## 2. Background and Context

### 2.1 The 2006 Crisis - a *Lorosa'e- Loromonu* conflict?

The term '*Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict' in this report applies to animosities, distrust and fighting between the people originating from *Lorosa'e*/Eastern (Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem) districts and people originating from *Loromonu*/Western (Bobonaro, Covalima, Oecussi, Liquica, Ermera, Aileu, Ainaro, Mantuto, and Manufahi) districts. We use these terms careful not to entrench them, and mindful that we are dealing with a moment in time when such regional distinctions are (re)surfacing and are (re)constructed as basis for separation, and sentiments of oppositional identities are to the detriment of relations between the people and regions of East Timor.

In January 2006, 159 soldiers from the western region (*Loromonu*) signed a petition alleging mismanagement and discrimination of people from the western region of East Timor within the F-FDTL. The petition was addressed to the President and copied to the Chief of the Defence Force and the Minister of Defence. After a couple of weeks, the petitioners had not received any response from the President or the Government. In the second week of February, 418 petitioners held a march at the President's Office, demanding a response to their petition. The President established a commission consisting of members of the F-FDTL and Members of Parliament to investigate the allegations. The commission failed to address the issue<sup>5</sup> to the satisfaction of the petitioners.

With support from the Government, the F-FDTL dismissed the by then 595 soldiers (one third of the F-FDTL) in March 2006. In the same month, quoting the petitioners, the President of the Republic gave credence to the petitioners' grievance that the dismissal of the petitioners was discrimination of Easterners against Westerners within F-FDTL, which fostered the perception of a 'communal' conflict between *Lorosa'e – Loromonu*. The general population, especially those who lived in Dili was confused about the situation<sup>6</sup>. Instead of resolving the problem internally in the F-FDTL barracks, the issues were brought outside onto the street in demonstrations and soon spiralled out of control. Some people used the chaotic situation to address their unresolved personal problems by seeking revenge against their 'enemy' in the past<sup>7</sup>.

Violence broke out on the streets of Dili with a clear faultline visible between *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* communities as many houses were burnt down and residents fled their homes. Many live in refugee centres across Dili until today, and some people have left to their rural

<sup>5</sup> Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006), Chapter II, p. 21

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> As a new nation, East Timor has gone through lots of violence and division between individual, families, clans, regions, and political parties. Those who felt were unfairly treated by others (or government), used the recent violent situation to seek revenge.



home districts. Streets in Dili were not safe for either *Lorosa'e* or *Loromonu* people. Illegal check points were set up by youth gangs from both sides, looking for people who came from the 'other' region. Because it was difficult to identify which person is from which region, the youth gangs used Tetum (one official language) to determine where people came from.<sup>8</sup> In the districts people will speak Tetum with distinctions in their pronunciation. Subsequently, people from the region now considered 'Other' could not go or have access to some *bairos* [suburbs], even if they lived there before the conflict. Looting took place and people lived in fear creating a strong sense of animosity and distrust between people from the two regions and between people and the government. The same thing happened in the districts. *Lorosa'e* men who were married to *Loromonu* women left their wives and children in the western districts in search for secure places in Dili or went back to their own districts of origin.

For many East Timorese the crisis and unrest rekindled the trauma and legacy of long years and political conflict and violence. Rumours in Dili made the situation worse, coupled with a lack of communication from Government side. People feared that the communal conflict would turn into a war because there were rumours which said that people in districts from both sides were preparing themselves for a bigger conflict. Widespread sentiments of distrust now persist towards the government that is seen to have failed to take decisive action to resolve the issues leading to the crisis. Lack of a sense of ownership towards the Government had been expressed by the people in several protests on the streets earlier, such as the 'Dec 02 demonstration' and 'nineteen days Church led protest in 2005'. The demands of those two protests were aimed at changes in Government policy and leadership practices.

This situation continued for several months and some violence is still ongoing, mutated into smaller conflicts between and among so-called 'Martial Arts Groups' and youth gangs. Efforts to resolve the conflict have been initiated by the government of East Timor, the UN, and local and international NGOs. Yet despite hard work and good intentions of these actors, there is little indication that the conflict and the perceptions and beliefs underpinning it are abating, and the security situation remains fragile. Unfortunately, incidents of violence continue to retain the facet of regional division. Groups of young people, whose compilation is unclear but who are said to have been politically 'instrumentalised', are still targeting civilians and their homes. At times this is apparently for personal gain, and at times it rests on intentions of 'cleansing' areas of those deemed 'other', either *Lorosa'e*/eastern or *Loromonu*/western. As such the situation has seen a disturbing tendency towards more and more regional polarisation and a concerning kind of 'ethnicisation'. The animosity continues presently, and in some areas people from both regions avoid mixing or visiting each other's districts or communal areas. The evolution of the crisis means that the *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* conflict has become entrenched in popular perception as a critical social faultline in the new East Timorese nation. Yet few people can name the origins or find logical causes for this particular development of division.

## 2.2 Historical and Political Roots to the *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* Conflict

### 2.2.1 A Historical View of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*

The literal meaning of the terms *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* refers to the position of the sun. *Lorosa'e* is the region where the sun rises and *Loromonu* where it sets. The people of the eastern portion of East Timor have therefore been associated with *Lorosa'e* and those from the West with *Loromonu*<sup>9</sup>. However, the terms are not necessarily exclusive to the people of East Timor<sup>10</sup>. Their use may have historical origins pre-dating European influence and refer to the entire island of Timor, *Lorosa'e* being associated with the original Papuan/Melanesian

<sup>8</sup> Physical features of people from both regions are the same. It is difficult to differentiate which person is from which region. The difference is obvious when they speak the language of Tetum.

<sup>9</sup> Various interviews from both regions, Feb – April 2007

<sup>10</sup> The term *Loromonu* was also used to refer to West Timor (Indonesia).



population that migrated to the eastern half of Timor, and *Loromonu* referring to the Malayan/Indonesian population on the western side.<sup>11</sup>

Within East Timor, other terms have also been associated with the geographical regions. *Firaku* and *Kaladi*, which are believed to have originated during the colonial era, have been used to refer to people from the east and west. The Portuguese used the terms *vira o cu* and *caldo* to refer to the particular attitudes of the population. *Calado* [Kaladi] made reference to the westerners who were characterized as being slow or quiet. The easterners in turn were called *Vira o cu* [Firaku] because they were considered temperamental and stubborn in nature<sup>12</sup> and known as 'troublemakers'. Other explanations suggest that the terms, *Firaku* and *Kaladi*, originated from the Makassae and Mambai ethno-linguistic groups. Later the terms became popularised to the extent that they simply expanded to broadly represent westerner or easterner.<sup>13</sup>

It is shown how the Belos<sup>14</sup> used their language Tetum in a sense to subjugate the two biggest ethnic groups in eastern Timor, the Mambai and Makasae, by declassifying them as *ema foho* (mountain people) as compared to themselves, the *ema fehan* (people of the coastal plains). The term *Firaku*, which in Makasae means "our comrades" became a Tetum word for "people living in the (north-)eastern mountains". The term *Kaladi* might have been an auto-classification by the Mambai and was adapted to Tetum, derogatorily referring to this ethnic group as "mountainous people of the West". The pre-existing imaginations of *Firaku* and *Kaladi* were passed down and even though there are many Timorese today saying that the terms actually originate from "virar -cu" and "calado" it is rather the other way around. The Portuguese in alliance with the Belos took over the Tetum derogatory terms and used existing tensions to divide and rule.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of the exact origins, there is limited evidence to suggest the historical stereotyping between the regions' populations produced violent relations. Some conflicts developed out of competition for market space between easterners and westerners, as migration to Dili began to increase from both sides of the country around the middle of the last century.<sup>16</sup> It is not clear though at what point during the evolution of the terms *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* mutual stereotyping became linked with distrust and violence. Likely, this has happened only more recently when the terms were used to claim political affiliation. Eastern *Lorosa'e* claimed to represent the resistance fighters and the 'true custodians' of an independent East Timor. In contrast, the western-based *Loromonu* were stereotyped as the accomplices of Indonesian occupation and anti-independence militia members.

Interviewees mentioned various interpretations of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*, some suggesting that many people view the terms as a reality and that they represent an actual social difference and division. Yet others also thought otherwise. In their eyes the terms were not fundamentally discriminatory but simply a type of classification to distinguish two peoples from different regions, while stressing that the East Timorese are one people.<sup>17</sup>

Even if the origins remain unclear, the identification with *Loromonu* or *Lorosa'e* has become a serious vulnerability for East Timor, susceptible to manipulation in a context of new nation-building where people search for belonging and stability as identities are shifting. Hence the

<sup>11</sup> Seixas (2005) p.6

<sup>12</sup> Babo-Soares (2003) p.269

<sup>13</sup> Babo-Soares (2003) p.270

<sup>14</sup> The Belo province existed during Portuguese time. The biggest Kingdom in Timor island, Wehiku – Wehali, located in Belo. At present Belo is a sub-district belong to Kabupaten (district) Atambua, Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (west Timor), Indonesia. Wehiku – Wehali still existed as a village in the south of Atambua.

<sup>15</sup> *Firaku e Kaladi: Etnicidades Prevalentes nas Imaginações Unitárias em Timor Leste* by: Paulo Castro Seixas, *Trabalhos de Antropologia e Etnologia*, vol. 45(1-2), SPAE, Porto, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Babo-Soares (2003) p.270, and Interview, Timorese political leader, Dili, February 2007

<sup>17</sup> Interviews, February to April 2007



research team went on to explore further questions of identity in East Timor with a view of finding possible areas of commonality and shared meaning.

## 2.2.2 The Politics of *Lorosa'e – Loromonu*

'The Kaladi side [*Loromonu*/West] felt offended because the sacrifices they made during the war were not recognised by their countrymen, the Firaku [*Lorosa'e*/East]' (Babo Soares, 2003).<sup>18</sup>

The *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict is a simplification of far more complex problems<sup>19</sup>. There is no evidence suggesting that communal conflict between 'east' and 'west' has been common in East Timor. However, many researchers suggest that there were small conflicts and animosities involving ethno-linguistic groups across the island before, pre- and during Portuguese time, Indonesian occupation and after the referendum. But these were usually resolved immediately. During Portuguese and Indonesian occupation, the politics of 'divide and rule' were used, however this also never reached the scale of a regional conflict between *Lorosa'e – Loromonu*. The CAVR Report (2004) confirms that, during the '74 – '75 civil war, there was no evidence suggesting that division between the peoples of *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* was central to the conflict. CAVR further described that, during the civil war, both regions suffered equally.<sup>20</sup>

It was after the referendum in 1999, when the common enemy Indonesia had gone, that the issue of *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* surfaced again. In the early days, just after the Indonesian had left, the East Timorese started talking about how great they were in fighting and defeating the Indonesians. Possibly, it was during this talk about the resistance war that people from the Eastern region claimed to have fought more in the resistance since many of the guerrilla bases were located there. The geographical terrain had been more favourable to a clandestine struggle. Interviews showed that some young *Lorosa'e* still believe that they have fought more in the resistance compared to their friends in the western region. A youth from Lospalos described that the Easterners fought and suffered more in the resistance because the resistance had a stronger base in the Eastern region with its mountainous forests. He further claimed that the resistance movement was (re)organised in the Eastern districts of Baucau, Viqueque and Lospalos and then spread to the Western districts. The post-independence *Lorosa'e* claims to have fought more in the resistance contributed to the growing animosity between the two regions and also played a role in the claims of discrimination within the F-FDTL. (The three highest commanders in the F-FDTL are from the Eastern districts of Baucau, Lospalos and Viqueque<sup>21</sup>). The same claims were used to legitimate why *Lorosa'e* people occupied most of the houses in Dili left behind empty after the Indonesian 'scorched earth' policy in 1999. Respondents stated that the *Loromonu* people were upset because before they had been more prevalent in Dili, and the *Lorosa'e* occupied the houses they had to leave behind because of the Indonesians. During the 2006 conflict, most of the houses burnt down were in fact houses where ownership had been contested between *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*<sup>22</sup> since 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Unnamed witness in Areia Branca, 1999. See Babo-Soares (2003) p.278

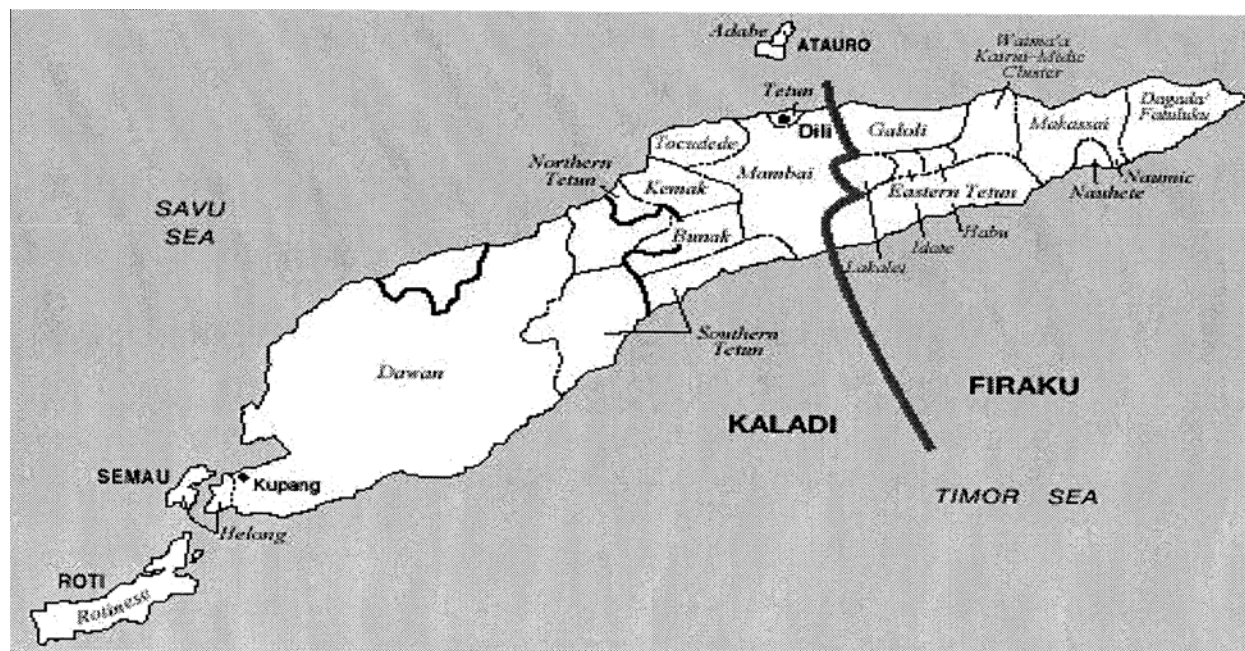
<sup>19</sup> Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006) p. 20

<sup>20</sup> See 'Chega!' The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation Timor-Leste. Executive Summary (2005).

<sup>21</sup> First Commander, Taur Matan Ruak is from Baucau, Second Commander, Lere Anan Timur is from Lautem, Lospalos and Third Commander, Falur Rate Laek is from Viqueque.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Parliament Member, Dili, February 2007.





Source: Babo Soares, (2003) p.273, originally from James J. Fox

The animosity and grievances between *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* can be also be looked at from a perspective of economics and education. The three Eastern regions of Baucau, Viqueque and Lospalos have a very high percentage in literacy<sup>23</sup>. Arguably, the three districts have better nutrition because the region has better soil in comparison to most districts in the western region. That means people from Eastern region are more educated and have better opportunities and access to jobs.

The processes of nation-state formation between 1999 – 2002 may also have contributed to the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict. As a new nation, the East Timorese have yet to develop a well-defined national identity that ensures national unity. It was assumed that a common national identity would simply develop by itself on the basis of the most familiar and shared Timorese identity base - the resistance against colonial rule - and that there was no need for further efforts to unify the East Timorese. However, as mentioned the resistance has now turned into a rather divisive topic in daily conversation. At the same time Western systems and values of democratic governance were adopted without a wider societal debate about the implications and consequences, which led to a sense of disconnection between the people and government. Many East Timorese feel that they are lacking a sense of ownership of current governance processes. They mistrust the current government and perceive that the idea of the nation-state (which in their eyes is identified with the current government and its practices) is imposed on them just as the colonial system was. Respondents stated that the nation-state seems to benefit only the political elites, which in turn come mainly from the eastern region that claimed to have fought more in the resistance and from the returned Timorese diaspora<sup>24</sup>.

The political dimension of the *Loromonu – Lorosa'e* conflict is multifaceted and complex. There are numerous and overlapping layers and challenges that need to be addressed. When asked about the causes and solutions to the regional tensions, respondents provided a multitude of inputs how peace activists and government bodies should tackle the problem from different angles. Many placed emphasis on the need to create a new base of solidarity

<sup>23</sup> East Timor National Statistic Directorate (2007): "2004 Population and Housing Census" (analysis by author with Dili excluded). From the 13 districts (From highest to lowest): Number of people working with Government, UN and NGO: no 2 = Baucau, no 3 = Lautem, no 9 = Viqueque. Number of people Graduate from Junior and High School: no 1 = Baucau, no 2 = Lautem, no 6 = Viqueque. Number of people Graduate from University: no 1 = Baucau, no 2 = Viqueque, no 3 = Lautem and Oecussi

<sup>24</sup> The diaspora refers to the Timorese (mainly mixed race) who left the country in "74-75 conflict". Most of the key positions in the government are occupied by former exiles. The most famous and influential group is called the "Maputo Mafia" which mainly come from FRETILIN party (the majority ruling party)



and understanding among the East Timorese through shared cultural values, traditions and history.

Respondents explained that while they also experience the more commonly accepted and circulated reasons (i.e. in official reports) for the crisis such as

- divisions in the security sector;
- the weak and inaccessible new justice system;
- the political differences<sup>25</sup> among the elites their manipulation of the situation to gain power and influence;
- land and property conflicts related to post-1999 claims and contestations;
- unemployment, lack of access to economic opportunities and education; and
- the neglect of issues pertaining to young people,

they also placed special emphasis on two facets of the conflict that have received less attention so far:

- a discord and misunderstandings between local East Timorese and Western values and belief systems; and
- a lack of understanding local cultural knowledge, traditions and practices on the side of (often foreign and/or government) actors leading conflict interventions.

Without claiming that there is a simplistic dichotomy between these realms,, the research proceeded to give special attention to understanding how the 'modern' and the traditional meet in this context, and how global/Western and local/East Timorese ideas and concepts of the world intersect and intermingle in the new dispensation.

### 3. 'Modern' and Traditional Understandings of the Crisis

#### 3.1 'Modern' Perspectives on the Causes of the Crisis

There is much information available on what causes the current crisis from modern point of view<sup>26</sup>, which also makes mention of the emerging divisions between East and West. The report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006), noted that

'The east-west division is a simplification of a far more complex issue. Timor-Leste has no modern history of concerted political violence between easterners and westerners as unified and opposing groups. However, there are sensitive divisions within Timorese society relating to notions of national and communal identity. The poorly defined national identity, particularly in the absence of a common enemy post-1999, is critical to an understanding of how the east versus west distinction has arisen in recent years.'<sup>27</sup>

Most reports on the crisis concentrate on political and economic factors, also posing them as main contributors to the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict: dissatisfaction of the population towards government; justice, security, youth, employment, education and health issues; slow economic growth and many unpopular government decisions and policies. Much focus is given to analysing the political scenario of how low trust towards the current government and its leadership causes a sense of alienation of the people in the nation-state building process.

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<sup>25</sup> Babo-Soares, (2003)

<sup>26</sup> See USAID (2006), ICG (2006), UN Commission of Inquiry Report (2006), and Babo-Soares (2003)

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006), Chapter II, p. 20



All these are seen to foster a weak base for nation-building in addition to faulty governance practices.

The report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006) also notes that 'the current crisis is caused by the frailty of State institutions and the weakness of the rule of law'. The report further describes the historical perspective where

'[the situation] can only be understood fully in the historical and cultural context of the country. Both the Portuguese and Indonesian eras created and subsumed internal divisions within Timor-Leste. Political competition within Timor-Leste has been historically settled through violence. Accordingly, many Timorese view the events of [the current crisis] as a continuum starting from the decolonization process in 1974/75'<sup>28</sup>

In relation to the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict a USAID (2006) report says that

'[i]t is important that steps are taken in the near-term to prevent this new societal fault line from becoming a permanent source of tension and instability in Timor-Leste. As a relatively recent phenomenon, there may still be a window of opportunity for reversing the trend.'<sup>29</sup>

A key activity proposed in the same report is to

'conduct surveys on knowledge, attitudes, and practices to better understand popular perceptions, how strongly those views are held and where there may be room for compromise and moderation. It is important to find mechanisms that put people's needs and preferences 'on the table' of the national political debate. The role of these types of surveys is to create better understanding among government, political parties and civil society of what people believe are the important components of resolving the crisis and restoring stability to Timor-Leste, including addressing the East-West divide'.

In a sense, this study can be understood as taking up the call for such in-depth and locally rooted 'cultural surveys' by going away from 'the city' and giving attention to local views and, particularly, to the local perspectives and views that may not immediately seem accessible, logical or plausible to the 'modern' /Western/ outsider's eye. Without wanting to romanticise 'the traditional' or 'the indigenous' and propose an idealistic and static view of 'traditional culture', the study's focus from here on places at its centre ideas that spring from the more peripheral rural and traditional settings of East Timor.

Emphasising the value of traditional culture and its power to shape behaviour and understanding is not a pretext for preventing change and progress. In fact, we work from a dynamic conception of culture:

'Culture is the whole repertoire of action, language and styles which enables a person to recognize their belonging to a given social group and to identify with the group in question, without necessarily being confined by it . [...] Culture and tradition, however, are not frozen or stagnant; the individuals and groups partaking of any culture actively shape and reshape it in their daily endeavours. *Culture changes because it is enmeshed in the turbulence of history, and because each act, each signification, each decision risks opening new meanings, vistas and possibilities.*'<sup>30</sup>

In the short-term culture may take on an inflexible structural character that shapes individual and group actions. In the long-term, culture is fluid and malleable, able to absorb new values

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (2006), Chapter II, p. 16

<sup>29</sup> USAID (2006) p. 36

<sup>30</sup> Nyamnjoh (2002) p. 114 (italics by authors)



and establish new social norms.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, within the setting of the *Lorosa'e-Loromonu* conflict, local cultural practices and traditions are a lens through which to understand social tensions, examine how resolution mechanisms developed in the past, and formulate culturally specific conflict resolution and prevention approaches. In this line, we turn to the traditional social structures that have dominated Timorese life for centuries and that continue to shape the present culture(s) and underlying values. These structures serve multiple purposes within society and are even enshrined within the new Constitution of East Timor:

‘Everyone has the right to cultural enjoyment and creativity and the duty to preserve, protect and value cultural heritage.’<sup>32</sup>

Here traditional cultural concepts and practices are examined in particular because of their capacity to generate social cohesion, stability and peace. The traditional concepts and practices have also acted as a foundation for shared meaning and decision-making. East Timor’s traditional social arrangements have transcended generations and allowed Timor’s numerous communities to survive regardless of continuous internal and external pressures and oppression. As will be shown subsequently, they continue to have an impact on contemporary Timorese. Thus, traditional social structures and practices are assessed through a lens of conflict management, resolution and prevention. It is anticipated that by reflecting through this lens, a set of guiding principles can be found, based on the central tenets of East Timorese cultural traditions. These principles, in turn, may be useful to improve existing and future peace initiatives and avert another *Loromonu – Lorosa’e* crisis and transform the trends of deepening social divisions.

### 3.2 Traditional Perspectives on the Causes of the Crisis

‘The most important feature of East Timor society has been its kinship systems and the social and political alliances which [...] enabled communities to remain cohesive, integrated and highly resistant to outside incursion.’<sup>33</sup>

In Timorese understanding the world has a spiritual and a physical dimension, both of which shape events and how they are comprehended. While the spiritual realm is a distinct mythological location inhabited by ancestors and spirits, it is fundamentally intertwined with the tangible world.<sup>34</sup> The interdependence and close relationship of the two worlds dictates a concern that resonates throughout all facets of Timorese social life: There must be a harmonious balance and order between the two worlds, achievable by the ‘right flow of values’. A balanced ‘flow’ is achievable by following established social values and obligations in the form of rituals and communal relationships exhibiting unity. Proper communal relationships tie the ‘lesser’ individual to the ‘greater’ community. While the individual has an extent of distinct rights and the ability to develop individual-to-individual relationships, Timorese tradition prioritises the individual’s relationship to the community. Thus, individuals should always give precedence to the needs of the community in the interest of ensuring a sense of unity.<sup>35</sup>

Traditional Timorese view the land of Timor as a sacred land (*Rai Lulik Timor*) inherited from one common original ancestor. The ancestor has set the rules and prohibitions, known as *Bandu* [traditional law or morale] for the Timorese people to follow. Breaking of the *Bandu* by an individual or community as a whole will upset the ancestor who inhabits the spiritual world and could cause serious misfortune to the community as a whole. As a result of failing to follow the *Bandu*, conflict, starvation disease or war will affect the society. The *Bandu*

<sup>31</sup> Faure (1999) p.188-189

<sup>32</sup> RDTL Constitution, Section 59 Point 5

<sup>33</sup> McWilliam (2005): p.38

<sup>34</sup> Hohe and Nixon (2003) p.14 – 15, 17, 24

<sup>35</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.80-82



dictates individuals' behaviour in the society and regulates how relationships are formed and maintained between people, the nature (land) and the ancestors. In another word, *Bandu* enforces people to respect each other, the nature and the ancestors. In order to understand disaster in the society, either social, natural or political, East Timorese people analyse it by looking at where the *Bandu* has been violated. Failing to balance the 'order' - established norms and rules formed over generations - by degrading the community solidarity or failing to follow *Bandu*, will result in ancestral retribution against individual transgressors, their families and, possibly, the entire community. Consequently, the boundary of village level conduct is established and controlled by the concern for order between the spiritual and the physical and the fear of ancestral vengeance. In sum, the spiritual world and tangible communal pressures reinforce positive behaviour. Behaviour refers to individual actions, to the creation of marriages or alliances and to the selection of leaders. All these events must be in accordance with rules set to ensure harmony between the two worlds.<sup>36</sup>

Many Timorese therefore interpret the recent turmoil between *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e* as the result of a physical-spiritual imbalance and find this a reason to ask the traditional practitioners of *lisan* [custom, tradition] for help. From the traditional point of view, the root of imbalance at the heart of the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* divide has been attributed to different causes. Some respondents attributed the recent violence to the adoption of Western values<sup>37</sup> and the gradual loss of traditional [*lisan*] values. When the *Bandu* is violated, social order is out of balance, and people act and behave improperly in society in the form of lootings, thefts, murders, gangs fighting, burning houses, and other immoral behaviours.<sup>38</sup> Interviewees also said the Government's lack of acknowledgement of traditional authority and values is one of the key problems behind the crisis facing East Timor. As a result, the ancestors, who set the rules and regulations for the society, are upset and they disturb the spiritual world causing imbalance to the real world in the form of social or political conflict, natural disaster or other misfortune impacts to the society. This phenomenon for the Timorese is known as *Malisan* (curse).

Some interviewees also attributed recent violence to the unreturned *lulik* [sacred] power was used by the resistance fighters during the independence struggle to the *Uma Lulik* [sacred house] where they got it from.<sup>39</sup> They suggested that the East Timorese people, through the government, have forgotten the martyrs (*Matebian*/War Heroes) who sacrificed their lives during the resistance. These martyrs or fighters are part of the spiritual world at the moment. When they are upset, the spiritual world is out of order, resulting in conflict in the real world, i.e. in the form of the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* issue. The East Timorese described this phenomenon as *Malisan husi Matebian sira* [curse from the martyrs] or *Matebian Babeur* [disturbances from the spirit world to the real world by the martyrs].

Many Timorese feel that the current social upheaval can only be addressed by establishing a harmony between the spiritual and physical world, which is achieved through rituals and ceremonies. All *lia nains* [traditional judicial authority] interviewed stressed the same point regarding this issue: If the spiritual-physical imbalance of the world stays unaddressed, conflict will continue to come in different forms. Considering that these views seem to be widely shared among the rural population and among parts of the urban population, a fundamental question arises: Faced with a potentially divided nation, what kind of conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms can be used within a context where the physical and spiritual are out of balance or even collide? In order to address this question, we need to have a closer look at how traditional conceptions and community structures in East Timor function.

<sup>36</sup> Hohe, and Nixon (2003) p.14 – 15, 17 - 18, 24

<sup>37</sup> Improper implementation of Democracy and Human Rights Values

<sup>38</sup> Interview, *Dato*, Baucau, April 2007

<sup>39</sup> In 2006 President Xanana Gusmao initiated a *Hamulak* or *Halot Meit ho Kroat* ceremonial program to try and have all *lulik* power returned to their proper *Uma Luliks*. This can only be done through proper ritual in each of the *Uma Lulik* where the power is taken from.



## 4. Traditional Concepts and Community Structures in East Timor

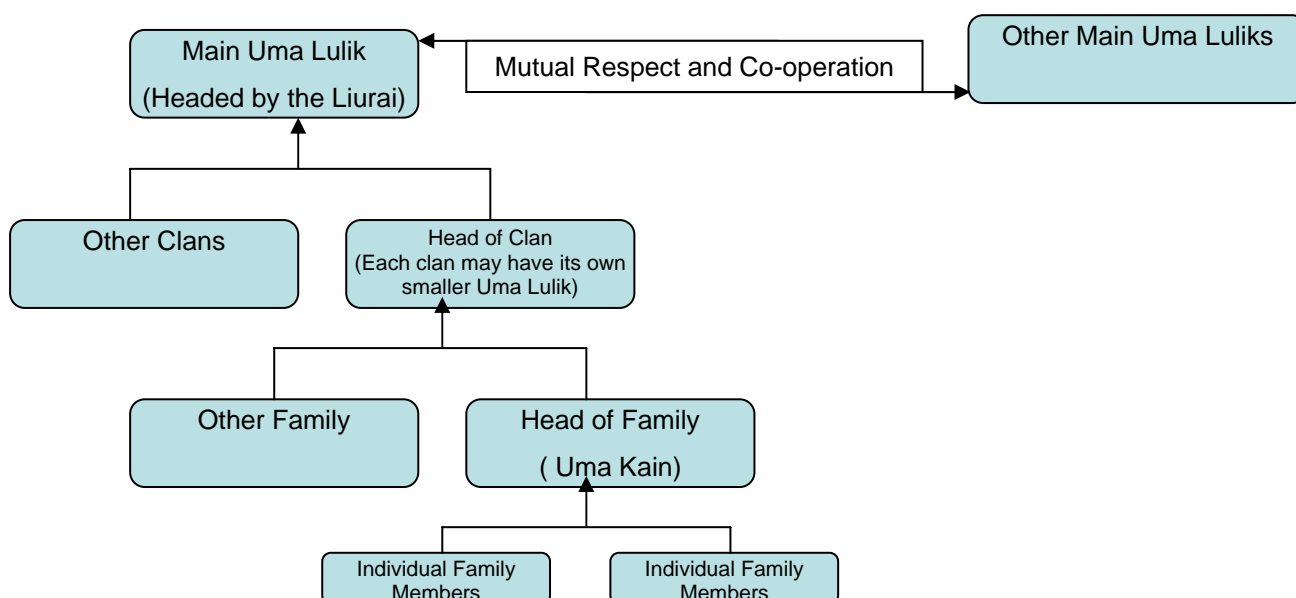
The main traditional social structures that continue to imprint on East Timorese identity and culture and impact on communal relations are:

- the concept of *Uma Lulik* [sacred house pertaining to powers & relations]
- the structures of traditional leadership (political, spiritual, judicial)
- the practice of having *Sasan Lulik* [sacred objects]

### 4.1 The Uma Lulik and Relationships

'*Uma Lulik*'s function for the Timorese is the root (base) of life itself. [...] Secondly, *Uma Lulik* strengthens and creates strong unity amongst people, village, sub-district and even at district level by binding relationships between the *Umas*'.<sup>40</sup>

The *Uma Lulik* is both a sacred house (an actual place) and a metaphorical 'sacred house' in the sense of a broader spiritual and relational home an individual has in the world. Community membership and group solidarity is facilitated through the *uma lulik* and the identification of one's extended family. The family begins with the immediate household or *uma kain*, which belongs to a larger *knua* or clan. Clans in turn are associated with an *uma lulik*, a sacred house that acts as the nucleus to the multiple layers of extended family.<sup>41</sup>



Symbolically, the *uma lulik* is the epicentre of Timorese values because the creation of an extended family structures is dependent on its role. It functions as a 'reserve of culture' that 'bind[s] individuals and households within an historical and symbolic unity'.<sup>42</sup> Unity and solidarity is framed within the context of the *uma lulik*'s use in creating, negotiating and maintaining forms of social relationships. First, the sacred house sets the parameters and lineage of family relations. It identifies the origins of the founding ancestors, the first to inhabit a territory, through the use of ancient relics (*sasan lulik*) and oral narratives. With a common ancestry identified, ceremonies and ritual taking place in the house re-affirm ties to

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Youth/Teacher, Suai, April 2007

<sup>41</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.23

<sup>42</sup> McWilliam (2005), p.32



ancestral generations, unify extended family members and bind them to each other and to the specific geographic territory associated with the house.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, the sacred houses play a pivotal role in a broader social functioning by forming a network of house group alliances that establish the core of communal relations. The alliances are built on top of family groupings to form continuously larger social units from a settlement to hamlet to an expansive kingdom. The goal of these types of alliances is two fold. It keeps the family 'alive' by extending it into the future and generates a peaceful bond between all members. The procedure that keeps the family 'alive' also acts a bond between other house-families that is created via marriage exchanges. Marriages unite both individuals and entire families or houses.<sup>44</sup> Following the marriage, the bond is extended into the future with 'inter-generational exchanges'. Gifts and services are continuously exchanged between alliances, and a sense of debt or gratitude is bestowed to houses that 'give' a wife to a 'receiving house'. The sustained duplication of exchanges and ritual solidifies relations while also reminding all members of their responsibilities to alliance members. Essentially, the house alliance system forms a Timorese specific social contract between individuals under the same family alliance umbrella, extending from household to kingdom levels. Again, it is the shared norms and ancestral spiritual beliefs created and sustained within the *uma lulik* that map out communal behaviour and enforce the belief that eschewing responsibilities or breaking generational rules will spark ancestral retribution.<sup>45</sup>

Historically, internal kingdom relations tended to be pacific through a shared image of one's ancestry and association to an *uma lulik*. This was not necessarily the case with external relations and a form of conflict prevention was required to allow inter-mixing and trade between populations. To overcome the generally hostile relations kingdoms practiced between one another the ritual use of blood oaths [*juramentu*]<sup>46</sup>. The principle behind the *juramentu* is that family or siblings are not antagonistic to each other. If kingdoms had no direct blood relationship, then symbolic 'blood' relations were created to bind kingdom members to each other, to bind them as 'brothers'.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, the *juramentu* constructed new spiritual attachments that brought the pressures of ancestral power into maintaining the peace.

Evidence shows that, ancient *Juramentu* agreed upon many years ago between East Timorese families, tribes, and regions are still in existence today. People still honour and still show respect to the agreements negotiated. *Juramentu* on a communal level occurred as recently as 28 November 2006. People from five sub-districts of Lautem, conducted a *juramentu* in Lospalos to bind community members and ban inter-communal violence. According to a *lia nain*, after the ceremony the people of Lautem now view each other as brothers and sisters.

Throughout the 24 years of Indonesian occupation, the administration used the symbol of the *uma lulik* to represent East Timor. While Indonesia failed to pacify resistance, it acknowledged the potential of the *uma* as a unifying symbol and had hoped to exploit it.<sup>48</sup> The successful struggle against Indonesian occupation for 24 years highlights the effectiveness and unifying potency of the *uma lulik* and its alliance networks in contemporary times. The clandestine resistance movement survived in part due to the house-based alliances that facilitated communication and logistical support for resistance fighters. These alliances, know as '*nucleos de resistencia popular*' [popular resistance cells], re-created affiliation on a greatly expanded regional level using the village level system of kin-based

<sup>43</sup> McWilliam (2005), p.32

<sup>44</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.24

<sup>45</sup> McWilliam (2005) p.32-33

<sup>46</sup> *Juramentu* is used either to end a conflict, to set up new social forms or to establish new relationships between individuals, clans or kingdoms.

<sup>47</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.23

<sup>48</sup> McWilliam (2005) p.32



bonds under the banner of nationalism<sup>49</sup>. Across the country in present-day East Timor, local groups and communities are busy with the task of rebuilding their ritual houses and reinstating the central importance of the sacred house in their lives.<sup>50</sup>

## 4.2 Leadership: Liurai, Dato and Lia Nain

The *uma lulik* system has also structured political leadership in Timorese society. Members of the oldest *uma luliks* in the area command the most prestige and through the complex system of alliances and marriages, power is disseminated down from the oldest to youngest established family and its associated *uma lulik*.<sup>51</sup> Each sacred house and its associated extended family in the hierarchy is designated a particular community role and responsibility in terms of conflict management.<sup>52</sup>

Leadership roles concentrate on three individuals, each representing a particular element of power. The *liurai* or kings, are associated with the main *uma luliks* in different kingdoms and control political authority. Their functions revolve around external relations, making peace or war between foreign kingdoms and managing outside influences diplomatically. They would design peaceful relations with other kingdoms through symbolic bloodlines via the *juramentu* process or initiate marriage procedures between parties when blood oaths did not create sufficient peace.<sup>53</sup> While they do not necessarily manage internal disputes, their acceptance of agreements is necessary as a final form of legitimisation of resolution outcomes.

Counter the political authority is the ritual authority, the *Dato* [spiritual leader]. *Datos* are connected to the spiritual world and therefore are able to make decisions based on ancestral order and values. The *Datos* associated the founding *Uma Luliks*. Metaphorically speaking, they personify a traditional mode of dispute prevention. Their communication with the spiritual world gives them the legitimacy to dictate *Bandu* and other social norms that community members must follow to achieve spiritual harmony and physical stability. Their ritual authority also dictates that they perform all ceremonies and select the *liurai* from the correct *uma* and with the appropriate leadership qualities.

The final functionary position is the *lia nain*, the judicial authority or conflict arbitrator. An oral tradition in East Timor means that this position is central to mediation and negotiation. The *lia nain* are considered the 'owner of words' because they alone have the knowledge of ancestral rules and can therefore determine compensation and interpret laws for the community.<sup>54</sup> Once decisions are reached, they solidify the agreement through a *juramentu* That binds parties to the terms of the agreements.

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<sup>49</sup> McWilliam (2005) p.35

<sup>50</sup> McWilliam (2005) p.28

<sup>51</sup> McWilliam (2005) p.34

<sup>52</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.21

<sup>53</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.23

<sup>54</sup> Hohe and Nixon (2003) p.14 – 15, 24



Tanja Hohe and Sofi Ospina (2001) describe that the traditional structure has gone through the following historical changes:

	Local level		Higher level (kingdom, sub-district, etc.)		
	Ritual authority	Political authority	Ritual authority	Political informal authority,	Political authority, formal
<b>Traditional system</b>	Kuku nains, beis etc.	Lian nains	Kuku nains, beis, etc.	Liurai, dato	
<b>Portuguese system</b>	Kuku nains, beis, etc.	Lian nains	Kuku nains, beis, etc.	Liurai, dato, now renamed regulo and chefe do suco	Integrate liurai and dato in the governmental work
<b>Indonesian system</b>	Kuku nains, beis etc.	Lian nains	Kuku nains, beis etc.	Some liurais, dato becomes informal power	Some liurais, datos become formal powers (sub-district chiefs, village chiefs)
<b>Transitional period</b>	Kuku nains, beis etc.	Lian nains	Kuku nains	Informal political powers that stay in symbolic positions, liurais that receive guests and take their seats in ceremonies or help in conflict resolution.	Political powers (dato or liurais) that are integrated into the government and have formal power, work as governmental bodies. This groups starts being joined by people that are not of royal descent.

*Applied level of power. (Source: Hohe & Ospina,[ 2001] p.74)*

### 4.3 Sasan Lulik

Vital to the role of traditional leaders and kept within the *uma lulik* are the sacred objects, the *sasan lulik*<sup>55</sup>, which come in different shapes and forms. Most of the objects are seen to belong to the ancestor, and some of them are collected naturally. While all houses contain sacred objects, leaders in particular store the *rota*<sup>56</sup> and the sacred flag<sup>57</sup>. The *rota* is a sacred rattan stick that signifies their prominence and legitimate rule over land and people. The one that holds the rattan stick and the flag has the power to rule. As the *rota* is believed to be passed down from generation to generation, the *liurai* have symbolic support from their ancestry, which ensures their legitimacy among the members of the community to rule the land and the people. Timorese myths suggest that the *rota* itself contains the authority of the king; therefore it can be transferred to new areas to establish new kingdoms.<sup>58</sup>

In the new setting of governance since independence, national leaders have not held any *Sasan Lulik* to legitimate their power. Their legitimacy as current national leaders comes from the elections, which for most Timorese is still an alien idea. This created confusion among many people because for now the former legitimate leaders are out of power and replaced by national leaders who do not (yet) have the appropriate legitimacy in the spiritual sense. However, in rural settings the *liurai* are still considered legitimate and have a strong influence on the local people.

<sup>55</sup> Each *Uma Lulik* has their own *sasan lulik* in different forms of shapes. Many of them are materials passed down from the ancestor.

<sup>56</sup> The origins of the *Rota* and the cultural flag are still unknown and still open for debates. Some people suggested that the idea of the *Rota* was introduced by the Portuguese Monarchy system (ended around 1910) and later replaced by the Republic *Rota*. Traditional elders stressed that, the older *Rota*, which is now viewed as one of the most important sacred objects, is coming from the ancestor.

<sup>57</sup> The flag is now viewed as cultural flag, and probably introduced to the Timorese with the monarchy *Rota*.

<sup>58</sup> Hohe and Ospina (2001) p.41



## 5. Traditional Practices of Conflict Management in East Timor

‘Community members that had been entangled in a tense relationship, now have to reconcile to emphasize that the conflict is over and that both sides are now entering a peaceful relationship again. There cannot be a winner and a loser left behind in the same village. This is crucial for the survival of the community. If there is no reconciliation, tension can survive and threaten the community at a later stage.’<sup>59</sup>

Assumptions that Western methods for conflict prevention, management and resolution applied to non-Western countries will facilitate peace<sup>60</sup> have to some extent contributed to violence in postcolonial settings<sup>61</sup> that are often characterised by a tumultuous history and generally weak statehood. Consequently, parallel social structures based on traditional understandings and Western understandings co-exist and overlap throughout many processes of nation-building. The co-existence and blending of structures suggests means that stakeholders bring various conflicting agendas to the situation that are not necessarily compatible with modern conflict transformation methods.<sup>62</sup>

While state-centric conflict frameworks are useful to some extent, traditional community-based frameworks need to be examined in a search for opportunities to work together synergistically. Since East Timor has a rich tradition of functional social structures and peace mechanisms that continue to exist, influence and carry a base of legitimacy that has demonstrated resilience<sup>63</sup>, our focal point of examining customary practices is on their beneficial qualities and principles that espouse values of solidarity, stability and social harmony. These elements could contribute towards building peace and overcoming the problems that have curtailed formal state-based dialogue programs after the 2006 crisis.<sup>64</sup>

### 5.1 *Nahe Biti* and *Juramentu*: Two Timorese Grassroots Mechanisms

‘*Nahe biti* is a reference to a venue, space or place where family or wider social issues are discussed, debated, settled, its meaning has encompassed mending differences, resolving dispute and settling political conflict among the East Timorese. [...] *Nahe Biti* was popularized in 1974 to resolve political differences in 1974 after the civil war, and used again in 1999 for the same purpose.’<sup>65</sup>

Modern approaches to conflict management, from formal courts to streamlined dialogue practice, have a multitude of characteristics that are unfamiliar to the Timorese people.<sup>66</sup> Respondents in the *Law and Justice in East Timor Report* (2004) spoke of their experience with the new formal justice system. They claimed laws were not readily enforced, processes were not well comprehended, accessibility was limited and expensive, and - compared to

<sup>59</sup> Hohe and Nixon (2003) p. 23

<sup>60</sup> Mohamed (2002) p.11

<sup>61</sup> Osamba (2001) p.71

<sup>62</sup> Boege, Voelker. *Traditional Approaches to Conflict Transformation - Potentials and Limits* Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2007 [cited 28 February 2007]. Available from [www.berghof-handbook.net](http://www.berghof-handbook.net).

<sup>63</sup> Refer to The Asia Foundation, *Law and Justice in East Timor: A Survey of Citizen Awareness and Attitudes Regarding Law and Justice in East Timor* (2004). The report highlights the salient position customary practice holds in the perceptions of East Timorese.

<sup>64</sup> Numerous study participants emphasised a sense of discord between Western ideas being “imposed” on their way of living, culture and political structures. However these statements were not necessarily normative in nature, rather they focused on the idea that formal practices were implemented without consultation, comprehensive understanding and lacked a sense of legitimacy.

<sup>65</sup> Babo-Soares (2004) p.23

<sup>66</sup> Graydon (2005)



*lisan* [traditional] practices - the formal courts garnered less confidence.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, perceptions of the formal system show a noteworthy proportion of East Timorese lacking an affinity to consider and use it as a reliable system. The challenge, however, encompasses more than the pragmatics of the judicial and legal system that are novel to the population. It is the core philosophical base of the formal sector that presents a formidable hurdle. The epistemological outlook of 'modern'/Western perspectives finds answers to conflict resolution in the physical world without consulting the spiritual, a concept fundamentally at odds with the East Timorese view of the world as made of spiritual-material dimensions described earlier. The *modus operandi* of legal procedures focuses on individuals and takes place in an environmental sphere that formalises active participation to a minimum. This methodology disassociates the community from both individuals and events and contradicts the integral component of Timorese identity constructed around the value of communal relationships.

This is different in traditional community leadership and *lisan* [customary] practices such as *nahe biti* (a traditional dialogue process). A large part of the population believes that the *lisan*-based conflict resolution methods are readily available, express their own values and are legitimate.<sup>68</sup> Familiarity, a sense of fairness and a history of functionality with traditional modalities of justice and law have fostered confidence.<sup>69</sup> The *lisan* system revolving around the use of *nahe biti*, translating to 'unfolding or laying the mat', centres on a dialogue forum that has provided continuity for hundreds of years and survived two colonial periods. It is still in use today by local communities when settling disputes and conflicts.<sup>70</sup>

*Nahe biti* may be broken down into two aspects. Firstly,

- it facilitates the need for a shared fundamental understanding of life within one sociality, and secondly,
- it enables the pragmatic restoration of community relationships.

We mentioned that the essence of life in East Timor depends on the harmony between the physical and spiritual world, an understanding of life that attributes tragedy and disaster to an instability caused by 'wrong-doing' and lack of respect to the spiritual world inhabited by the ancestors. 'Wrong doing' thus falls into a category of action that has broken the social order created by the ancestry. It is not necessarily viewed as a crime that may be resolved by addressing an individual transgressor. This outlook directs how many East Timorese understand peace-making and justice: they link the past [*hun*] and the future [*rohan*].<sup>71</sup> Peace or reconciliation is understood to address both past wounds against victims and ancestry and address the future of the community by reinforcing harmonious relationships. The goal is the restoration of values in both tangible social relations and the spiritual world of the ancestors. *Nahe biti* enables conflict management in both worlds and brings *dame* [peace] and *hakmatek* [stability] to communities.<sup>72</sup>

The actual *nahe biti* process brings disputing parties, their families and village elders (or relevant authorities) together on a woven mat. The event takes place in the public sphere, so all community members are aware of the dispute, though not all are directly involved in the dialogue and negotiation process. The event date, location and invitation to all pertinent parties are fundamental. Every step must be followed accordingly or harmony is jeopardised.<sup>73</sup> The agenda of the meeting is to establish compensation for the wrong-doing that all parties agree upon. That is, disputing parties must voluntarily accept the terms of

<sup>67</sup> Refer to The Asia Foundation, *Law and Justice in East Timor: A Survey of Citizen Awareness and Attitudes Regarding Law and Justice in East Timor* report (2004).

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Hohe and Nixon (2003), Soares (2004) p.15

<sup>71</sup> Babo-Soares (2004) p.23

<sup>72</sup> Babo-Soares (2004) p.27

<sup>73</sup> Babo-Soares (2004) p.28



compensation. *Datos* [spiritual authority] must accept that compensations are in accordance with the spirit world; *lia nain* [judicial authority] must view compensation as agreeing with historical precedents and tradition; and *liurai* [political authority or village chiefs] act as witness and give final approval. While this type of consensus may appear problematic and time-consuming, it is the spirit of harmony and long-term foresight that impels participants to overcome individual differences. Once a group solution is reached, it is considered permanent.<sup>74</sup>

The purpose of *nahe biti* taking place within the public sphere is related to the fundamental understanding of conflict or 'crime'. It is not an individual action that may be remedied through procedures directed at individual lawbreakers. Conflict or 'crime' is seen as a communal problem that puts all community members at risk due to the imbalance in social and ancestral order it has caused. That said, there are communal pressures on disputing parties to resolve the issue expediently and harmoniously. This pressure generally takes the form of shaming and acquiring a disgraced name in case of non-compliance. The combination of spiritual and communal forces helps negotiations move forward and gives credence to the open nature of *nahe biti*.

## 5.2 Nahe Biti Bo'ot and Juramentu

The procedure on the *nahe biti bo'ot* is used to deal with a wider, inter-communal conflict such as the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* issue. This process that extends beyond family and blood relations is usually finalized with a *juramentu* or a 'blood oath'. The blood of a sacrificed animal [*hemu ran*], is mixed with *tua* [local palm wine]. The drinking of the blood by both parties acknowledges their mutually binding agreement to the terms of the negotiation, and it symbolically re-connects disputing parties to their ancestral past, to each other and to the future. The ceremony represents the 'death' of the conflict and re-establishment of relations between those who had been divided. The attachment of ancestral spirits is a prerequisite to achieving *dame* [peace] and *hakmatek* [stability] and also ensures that peace is long-term and sustainable. If participants break their peace oath, they will break the ancestral order and grave disasters may befall themselves, their family and future generations. A sense of loyalty is therefore created, loyalty to the immediate relations, to one's *uma lulik* and importantly, to ancestral spirits backed up by a sense of fear if agreements are disobeyed. The *juramentu* is often completed with the chewing of a betel nut, [*mama buah malus*] as a sign that all parties recognise the end of the conflict and they are now free to enjoy normal community relations. The *juramentu* thus concludes the conflict resolution process while also acting as long-term preventive mechanism for the re-emergence of conflict between parties.

The role of *Juramentu* is described by Tanja Hohe as follows:

'For inter-communal conflict, mostly land disputes or political conflicts, they can quickly turn into a war. Their resolution focuses less on restoration than on the creation of socio-cosmic order. Mechanisms of defending the community or the establishment of political and diplomatic relations come into place. Peace is established through the foundation of kinship or marriage relations. Communities either try to find such links in the histories of their families, or they establish them anew by entering a blood oath (*Juramentu*) and, therefore, becoming blood brothers, or by giving one of their daughters for marriage.'<sup>75</sup>

Together these practices represent a customary and culturally specific toolbox of conflict management, resolution and prevention practices that may shed light on the core question of

<sup>74</sup> Hohe and Nixon (2003) p.25 - 26

<sup>75</sup> Hohe (2003a) p.343



how contemporary peace methods can be used in a way that is context- and culturally specific to the needs of East Timor.

## 6. Impact, value and limitations of traditional conflict management

### 6.1. A Variety of Voices

#### 6.1.1 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

'I believe in what our ancestors used to do, for example sit together [on *Nahe Biti*] to find a solution [to a conflict]. I also believe that our leaders specially those who is in the justice sector can use their power to brought those crisis actors to court'<sup>76</sup>

IDPs, people who now live in make-shift camps around Dili and in the countryside, were most affected by the current crisis and the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict. People considering themselves *Lorosa'e* or *Loromonu* across the country still have animosity and grievances towards each other, particularly those in the camps. Many doubt that they will go back to their former homes soon. During the research we found that few IDPs in the Eastern region wanted to go back to Dili. In the Western region, we found that most of the IDPs from the their region had returned to Dili. International staff from an NGO working closely with the IDPs unofficially quoted that 80% of the IDPs in the country were considered Easterners.

There are numerous reasons cited by the IDPs when we asked why they had not returned to their home yet. Their first concern was security and stability which had not been provided by the Government. The second concern was resolving the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict with a longer-term perspective. In relation to resolving the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict, the majority of IDP respondents suggested to get the traditional elders on a *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* to conduct a *Juramentu*. Until such a process is undertaken, they believe the conflict will reappear in the future and affect future generations.

#### 6.1.2 Political Leaders

'[To resolve *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict] it has to be the traditional leaders of the *Uma Lulik* who sit down and discuss on what we call *Nahe Biti Bo'ot*. It can't just be anyone [who can represent people and talk on *Nahe Biti*]. But I see that we, Timorese are losing this good tradition. People who got higher education don't really care for this [culture and traditions] anymore. So if we'd return to (use) our culture, which is very traditional, they'd be calling us "backwards". But my party wants to pay attention to this, because as we know our identity is coming from the culture. If we lose it, we're nobody. It's not that only what comes from the West [i.e. foreign values] is good. Why should we abandon our own culture and import a new one?'<sup>77</sup>

Political leaders' sentiments varied on the impact that traditional conflict management tools would have on resolving the *Loromonu – Lorosa'e* crisis. The fundamental issue to them was not necessarily whether they valued *lisan* practice because they all expressed their respect to traditional elders and valued culture in terms of the imprint it has on Timorese identity. When concerns were noted, they tended to isolate the pragmatic applicability and enforcement potential of *lisan* in a 'modernising' East Timor. One respondent noted that he appreciated traditional laws and rites, but the first condition to control social behaviour is a formal punitive justice system. A contrary position viewed pragmatic weakness inherent in *lisan* as endemic to all law and justice systems suggesting that no structure is perfect.

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<sup>76</sup> Interview, IDP/Youth, Viqueque, March 2007

<sup>77</sup> Interview, Political Leader, Dili February 2007



Traditional practices should be the primary force in creating a sense of justice and peace in East Timor; it is only when *lisan* has reached its limitations that the formal sector should be used. Many participants ultimately believed that traditional and modern dispute resolution mechanisms can be used in unison, with primacy leaning to customary practice.

A local news paper reported on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2007: ‘Mari Alkatiri as FRETILIN Secretary General said that, “to be East Timorese, we don’t need to go back to the *Uma Lulik*, we better defend our sovereignty and independence. We like it or not, people of East Timor do not have *Uma Lulik* anymore, because the ancestors of East Timor are all wanderers [*ema lao ral*].”<sup>78</sup>

Alkatiri’s opinion shows the divide in how politicians view East Timorese culture, tradition and society. According to some of our respondents, politicians’ ignorance and denial of the validity of cultural practices has contributed to the current civil conflict. At the same time one political party currently campaigns for invigorating East Timorese traditions, including *nahe biti*. ‘*Uma Lisan ida ba Timor oan Hotu*’<sup>79</sup> [One Uma Lisan for all East Timorese people] was the founding theme for this newly established political party at their national congress on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

### 6.1.3 East Timorese Intellectuals

‘I think the real challenge is how to transform the culture in the long-term. The question is how to have people understand Western [foreign] concepts such as human rights. You have to find a way to incorporate that into Timorese culture, to find parallel local knowledge, understanding and cultural practice and use them as an avenue for transformation. By just saying that Government has ratified a policy will not change the people. Expanding on this, you can use traditional law and combine it into modern. Modern is problematic because the Indonesia system was corrupt and inefficient [...] the challenge is to recapture confidence of people, and can hopefully use the traditional methods to imbue a sense of confidence, a link to the modern’<sup>80</sup>.

Dili-based intellectuals’ opinions on traditional dispute mechanisms closely paralleled the thoughts of political leaders. They expressed appreciation for culture and traditional practices that have evolved from the unique history of East Timor and viewed it as an important component in building national unity. One participant believed that East Timor suffers from a lack of national identity. He then proposed the notion that culture and traditional values, including *lisan*, could be used as a foundation to create a unified national identity. Another respondent suggested that culture offered a great opportunity to impact on the people of East Timor in a positive manner if more efforts went into recognising and exploring it.<sup>81</sup> As regards *lisan*’s impact, the same participant noted that society is much-fractured and using traditional methods could work, but they must be implemented in a long-term project. Others suggested that any customary practice would need enforcement by rule of law or the formal sector to have an impact because it had already lost its impact to the forces of migration and urbanisation. A final respondent offered another outlook on the impact traditional authority might have in Dili: ‘When it comes to politics (political influence) in Dili, maybe [there is no influence on youth]...but when it comes to culture (cultural influence), definitely. [Youth] usually go home for their ceremonies, the gang members still have ties to their home society, they have a spiritual leader and fear penalties from ancestors.’<sup>82</sup> Overall, Timorese intellectuals acknowledge that traditional conflict management and

<sup>78</sup> See Suara Timor Lorosa’e (7<sup>th</sup> May 2007) - Alkatiri: Timor Lalika Buka Uma Lisan

<sup>79</sup> See Suara Timor Lorosa’e (7<sup>th</sup> May 2007) – Joao Marianho, Terpilih Sebagai Ketua Umum PR (Partidu Republikanu)

<sup>80</sup> Interview, Timorese Intellectual (human rights lawyer), Dili, February 2007

<sup>81</sup> Interview, Timorese intellectual, Dili, February 2007

<sup>82</sup> Interview, Timorese intellectual, Dili February 2007



authority has a potential to impact society, however they all tended to indicate that the current methods of using *lisan* in Dili have not been entirely effective.

#### 6.1.4 Traditional Leaders

‘The *Matebian* [martyrs] from the dependence war each received *Lulik* power from *Uma Luliks* in *Lorosa’e* and *Loromonu*. We need to conduct ceremony to send the spirit of the martyrs to their resting place. Without this, their spirit will cause problems to East Timor and they [their spirit] will not let people to live in peace and harmony [...] Also we need to restore (recognise) the culture to ensure peace. Because our constitution is not strong here, it (the constitution) must be accepted by all and be blessed by elders – converted into a sacred object (*Sasan Lulik*) and be part of our culture.’<sup>83</sup>

All traditional leaders, encompassing *liurais* [political], *datos* [spiritual] and *lia nains* [judicial], supported the opinion that customary conflict methods were the most appropriate and effective way of dispelling inter-group conflict. They mentioned various problems with formal conflict dispute modalities that countered Timorese society’s values. While their position in traditional social structures represents a vested interest in remaining optimistic about the use and impact of *lisan*, they raised numerous points to qualify their opinions. Besides believing that the majority of the population still regards their roles and *lisan* with esteem, authority and legitimacy, they mentioned a very specific quality of *lisan* that is at the heart of the *Loromonu – Lorosa’e* divide: *Lisan* can effectively address the hurdle of creating a sense of trust between two groups of people, which have been challenged by the tensions arising from migration, economic pressure, and social and political change. They said that the only way to connect large groups of people divided by conflict is by using *nahe biti* and the groups’ affiliations to their *uma luliks*. So it is the possibility of reconciling and reunifying groups, as opposed to a limited number of individuals in modern dialogue strategies, which is the foundation of the elders support for *lisan*.

#### 6.1.5 Youth

‘As in our tradition here, and as elected *Suco* [village] Council representing youth, we have decided that, if there is a conflict, formal conflict resolution is not the only way of resolving disputes. But our ancestors has taught us how to resolve dispute as well. When there is conflict, we try to resolve it at a family level [using traditional methods]. When it failed, then we can go higher up to *Lia Nain* at *Aldeia* and Village level. If this failed again, we will make a recommendation to go through formal channel such as the police.’<sup>84</sup>

The input from youth has mostly been positive with regard to their views on traditional authority and *lisan* practice. Traditional songs about *nahe biti* are still played by youth aged from 8 to 24 at large informal gatherings. The songs repeat the idea of people coming together ‘to think’ and ‘to talk’. Two youth coordinators, one working with rural youth and another with urban, offered their opinions on the relevance of *lisan* to youth from their personal experiences. In the rural setting the respondent noted ‘where youth still live amongst the elders, they believe and follow what has been passed down from our ancestors. They still believe in our culture.’<sup>85</sup> Within the urban context, a youth coordinator from Los Palos said he worked with young people from 13 districts and organized a ceremony using *juramentu* under the authority of a *lia nain*. He said this event united the youth participants and was considered a success.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Lia Nain, Viqueque, March 2007. This phenomenon in Timorese tradition called *Malisan*

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Youth/Suco Council Member, Bobonaro, April 2007

<sup>85</sup> Interview, Youth representative, Bobonaro, March 2007



Another youth respondent cited a recent event. On 28 November 2006, people from 5 sub-districts of Lautem, conducted a local *juramentu* in Los Palos to ban people from having inter-communal violence. According to a local *lia nain*, after the *juramentu*, Lautem people have seen each other as family, as brother and sisters. Both these informants stressed that this event clearly showed the conflict management potential of *lisan* in contemporary settings. They suggested that the same idea could be brought to a national level to prevent conflict across the regional divide.<sup>86</sup>

Only one youth respondent expressed his doubts regarding the effect traditional ceremony or authority would have on Dili-based youth. He did stress, however, that while he himself and his close friends did not have an affinity to *lisan*, he had many acquaintances that believed in the authority of spiritual leaders. In general, most youth participants and representatives tended to be optimistic about the role *lisan* could have in bridging identities. Contrary to this position, a significant number of non-youth, Dili-based respondents expressed hesitation about the capacity of customary practices to have a meaningful impact on the young generation in Dili, which one elder said 'is losing its morality.'<sup>87</sup>

### 6.1.6 Church

"The church has to fight for solidarity; it is one of the values of the church and also a value of tradition. *Lisan/Adat* (tradition) was built around solidarity. So can easily link with old customs of Timor Leste [...] [the Church] should carry a value that unites people, does not have to say the church carries the people, but the values it pushes carries people – that opens it up for complementary relations"<sup>88</sup>

A priest actively campaigning about peace and justice described that,

"We tried to define our values and how to overcome the crisis, and we found *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* as one of the ways to do so. On *Nahe Biti* we talk about peace, but before we go there has to be justice. If people are aware that there is a conflict [for example about a bride price], then you take the problem to the elders, and they will decide who is right and also decide on the "punishment" (as e.g. a buffalo). And the victim also has to be ready to accept the apology. So when you get together you are disposed to reconcile. First thing in the peace building process is to establish justice that is a fundamental value. Reconciliation then means the integrity of creation, to bring harmony to the community, micro and also macro-cosmos relationship. This is also quite religious. People don't understand abstract concepts of reconciliation, justice or peace. Our question is not "What is?" but "How to be?"... meaning how we maintain our relationship one to another. Our concept is harmony"<sup>89</sup>

### 6.1.7 Views on the role of *Uma Lulik* in resolving the *Lorosa'e-Loromonu* conflict

The following statements highlight the thoughts of many participants. A current *Chefe de Suco* from a *liurai* family stated that

'the *uma lulik* is inherited from our ancestors to strengthen *lisan*, morality and customs, which enable people to follow rules in the society, so that we can create [social] order [...] If we put all this [*uma lulik*] together, we can use it to fix the bad [social problems] for the good of the future. Every year people [...] meet for ritual and ceremony in the *uma lulik*. Violence and conflict can be

<sup>86</sup> Interview, Youth and *lia nain*, Los Palos, March 2007

<sup>87</sup> Interview, *Dato* and ex-local parliament member, Baucau, March 2007

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Church Peace Activist, Dili February 2007

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Priest, Dili, February 2007



reduced because when people meet they know each other better and understand how they relate to each other.’<sup>90</sup>

A youth representative from Baucau, who was also *Chefe de Suco*, stated that,

‘a National *Uma Lulik* in Dili is a good idea because it will represent all Timorese, in all regions [...] and all will be able to identify themselves with one *uma lulik* in Dili even alongside their own [local] *uma luliks*.’<sup>91</sup>

A youth Representative from Bobonaro district said:

‘I think *Uma Lulik* it is very good idea for our country. Even in ancient time we had different *uma lulik* [and now] we can build a National *Uma Lulik* that will unite all of them. I am very proud and happy. It means that we have not forgotten the traditions from our ancestor.’<sup>92</sup>

A Lia Nain from the same area perceived that

‘[a National *Uma Lulik*] will make stronger [...] unity [in East Timor]. We [from *Lorosa’e* and *Loromonu*] will know each other better, and we will know [that] we are coming from the same house, and we will look at each other as brothers and sisters, with the same parents under one house’<sup>93</sup>

A youth from Suai representing women’s voices stated that ‘it is very good idea, if we want to build a National *Uma Lulik* to show to other countries and to symbolise that we have culture and identity. Make it happen.’<sup>94</sup>

Overall very few participants disagreed with the sentiments expressed above. While contradictory respondents did not fundamentally disagree with a strategy for peace based on the *uma lulik*, their disagreement rested on an assumption that the Timorese themselves would not be able to agree upon or create a single sacred house that represented all of East Timor. A Dili-based Timorese intellectual suggested that, ‘[a national *Uma Lulik* is] absolutely impossible, because you cannot combine Mambai and Los Palos. You can not combine Baucau and Los Palos or Baucau and Viqueque. Because [you cannot combine] the sacred *lulik*. That is why I absolutely disagree.’<sup>95</sup>

However, traditional elders’ only stipulation was that the process be initiated or requested by the Government, with support and acknowledgement from the Church. The Government should invite and consult with traditional leaders (*Dato*, *Liurai*, *Lia Nain*) from across the country. If these criteria were met, traditional elders would overcome the regional differences in practice in the interest of the well-being of the entire nation.

## 6.2 Limitations of Traditional Conflict Mechanisms

### 6.2.1 Urbanisation and Migration

With the challenges that independence has brought for traditional structures, *lisan* practices have particular limitations that should be acknowledged. East Timorese communities continue to face the pressures of change, state-building and democratisation, the monetisation of traditional economies, demographic shifts and urban migration, among others. These are all new challenges that have a direct impact on traditional structures by weakening their social and symbolic capital. In Dili, for example, community relations have begun to structure themselves around economic and social status, while people distance themselves from traditional *uma* alliances and leadership. Compounding the problem of

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<sup>90</sup> Interview, *Chefe do Suco*, Viqueque, March 2007

<sup>91</sup> Interview, *Chefe do Suco*, Baucau, March 2007

<sup>92</sup> Interview, Youth representative for Suco Council, Bobonaro, March 2007

<sup>93</sup> Interview, *Lia Nain*, Bobonaro, April 2007

<sup>94</sup> Interview, Youth/Women, Suai, 2007

<sup>95</sup> Interview, Timorese intellectual/Church representative, February 2007



migration is the distribution of groups within Dili now developing a sense of being separate 'ethnicities'. Regional concentrations in specific suburbs exist that reinforce a sense of solidarity based on perceptions of being *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e* instead of a national solidarity or being citizens living in one country. The urban movement towards the capital has also handicapped village support networks and communal enforcement mechanisms that help make *nahe biti* outcomes sustainable. Lastly, the recent introduction of Western legal and judicial practices has created a pluralistic normative space that remains ill-defined, and, inadvertently, traditional hierarchal relationships and values are losing their potency to enforce social cohesion and control.

### 6.2.2 Limited (National) Political Legitimacy

As mentioned above, one of the values of traditional practices is their ability to engender social change. A limited number of respondents expressed a concern about the weakness traditional relationships have within the context of 'modernity' and fast-paced change, specifically in relation to urban youth. One respondent emphasised that traditional practices would only bring 'superficial and peace' between *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e* that would end once the ceremony ended. His conclusion to addressing the identity crisis was solely through law, through punitive enforcement that isolated offenders.<sup>96</sup> His lack of regard for traditional practice was based on recent peace initiatives that used *lisan* and had failed to produce significant results. However, such attempts to use traditional methods to overcome regional identity tensions in Dili were not facilitated according to customary standard and therefore could not be effective.

### 6.2.3 Limited effects on urban youth - generation gap

Regarding urban youth, there is no evidence to suggest that this age bracket cannot acquire an appreciation of traditional positions of authority and identify with inherited practices if introduced to the meaning and values that heritage and customs can still have today. Urban youth may become central to forming a sense of a common nationality with the potential to reach across both regional and generational gaps. The research found that youth in the districts still hold traditional practice and leaders in high regard. One youth IDP in Viqueque responded that he believed in what his ancestors used to do; and that *lisan* would enable the Timorese themselves to resolve the conflict.<sup>97</sup> He found that formal law should be viewed as just one tool along with *lisan* to overcome emerging 'ethnic' animosities. All means to engender a culture of peace should be used concurrently.

### 6.2.4 Contesting spiritual institutions

Questions about the effectiveness of *lisan* have also been expressed based on the relationship between traditional practice and Catholicism. Firstly, there is the perception that the use of traditional ceremony, especially *juramentu*, which involves animal sacrifice, is a contradiction to Catholic values. Secondly, some respondents implied that the church might perceive competition between both institutions' influence on society. Pragmatically, there is the potential for the church to 'spoil' the use of *lisan* either directly or indirectly by not supporting initiatives.

The Catholic Church is an integral part of the identity of many East Timorese and holds a vast reserve of unifying power because of its role in the daily lives of both Easterners and Westerners. The church represents over 90% of the population and can support the Timorese in overcoming the challenges of violent and distrustful regional groupings.

In terms of Church involvement, a *lia nain* from Ainaro described that:

<sup>96</sup> Interview, Political leader, Dili, February 2007

<sup>97</sup> Interview, Youth IDP, Viqueque, March 2007



*'Nahe Biti Bo'ot* [to Overcome East – West Cleavage], church involvement is essential as mediator. Because they represent different part of moral and spiritual of the people. We all know the hard work of the church during resistance period. So, *Nahe Biti'ot* should involve traditional leaders, Government and Catholic Church'.<sup>98</sup>

Respondents also said that there is no conflict of interest in terms of how people identify themselves. Identifying with *lisan* and traditional structures is not mutually exclusive with Church identification. Numerous churches across the country are located within the same compounds as *uma luliks* and combine symbolic icons, so there is already a precedent for mutually beneficial relations between the two. Potentially, the Church can act as a meeting point to bring different 'ethnic' groups together under the banner of solidarity and unified faith. It may also be used to help overcome *lisan* diversity since Catholic practice shows continuity across the geographic East – West divide.

#### Traditional Concepts and the Church

Though the Church gained a powerful position through the history of the country, on the local level, they did not interfere much with political authorities. Politics and religion goes side by side and the Church sometimes even supports the local authorities in conflict resolution.

In many cases where we interviewed traditional elders, they tried to interpret Christianity in a way that fits within their own belief systems. From the perception of the majority of locals, Christianity does not form a contradiction with their local systems. The only struggle arises when the Church forbids central aspects of the local social and power structure, such as in the marriage system. As marriage is such an important part of maintaining peace and creating the local social structure, here the Church and the local systems clash most.

[...] How the Church and local customs go together seems to depend a lot on the local priest. Sometimes Christian and traditional ceremonies are practiced together, while other priests forbid the locals to go to their sacred places and try to tell them their ancestors are evil spirits.

In our observations, for most of the villagers the priests seem to be very respected people. They are given an honoured, high position in society according to the sacred issues they are dealing with. In fact, there are a lot of activities that are conducted together with the Church. Nonetheless, in relation to content, the thoughts of Christianity do not play a big role in the life of the village. Information about the Christian belief system is respected, as it seems to have to do with 'lulik', but it is integrated into the local belief system. All the different Christian stories are listened to and interpreted in a way that they confirm the local systems rather than contradict with them. Christianity is respected but is seen as something 'younger'; the 'old' and therefore more important aspect is the local belief system. The ritual authorities pay the Church respect and go to the masses, but within their Houses and areas they know well that the traditional system is the 'true and old' way of their ancestors. 'God baptised us straight away but the traditional system goes first. Traditional system, Church, then the government.'

Hohe, Tanja, and Sofia, Ospina. *Traditional Power Structures and the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project* - Final Report (2001, p.76-77)

## 6.2.5 'Divisive' Variations in *Lisan* [traditional] Practice

One concern emanating from non-traditional Dili-based intellectuals and international agency staff stressed the differences in *lisan* practice. There is a perception that the variations in communal practice strengthen ethno-linguistic divisions and that there is no sense of flexibility to accommodate these differences for the sake of solidarity. This notion holds for the unique practices in each district and even the 'melting pot' of Dili.<sup>99</sup> Contrary to this position, when questioning traditional elders and ritual authorities about the idea of creating a sense of solidarity based around *lisan* and the *uma lulik*, all of them supported the proposal regardless of *lisan* variances. As the primary grassroots stakeholders, they unequivocally supported the possibility of using a unifying ceremony or practice. In their opinions, they could overcome diversity amicably for the sake of unifying the country with an overarching national identity based on the *uma lulik*, *sasan lulik* and myth of origin. Their only requirements were that traditional authorities themselves negotiate how differences

<sup>98</sup> Interview, *Lia Nain*, Ainaro, April, 2007

<sup>99</sup> Interview – Timorese intellectual and international expert, Dili, February 22007



would be combined and the Government invites them to initiate the process design.<sup>100</sup> Another suggestion was to begin documenting traditional practices. The idea was that regional leaders may find that there are actually more similarities than anticipated and increased exposure to variety of *lisan* approaches will espouse acceptance.

### 6.2.6 Re-enforcing gender and age inequalities?

The final concern was not necessarily specific to East Timor, but in general related to traditional forms of conflict resolution. Non-traditional Timorese respondents have pointed to the debates on the use of traditional practices in relation to internationally accepted human rights standards. Gender and age inequalities specifically have been mentioned. Traditionally, it is elder males who have authority in *lisan*, while the *Loromonu - Lorosa'e* conflict affects both genders and all ages groups with young men as the critical actors of violence.

To effectively transform the deepening *Lorosa'e-Loromonu* divisions, all stakeholders, including women and youth, should partake in a process of transforming the conflict. However, human rights and traditional rites should not necessarily be viewed as mutually exclusive, as one respondent said: 'Human rights don't really go against our values.'<sup>101</sup> Points of reference exist where female inequalities may be transformed, for instance by expanding female participation. Women have the ability to be *lia nain* and, within the matriarchal *uma lulik*, they are the foremost authority. There is no evidence from interviews to support the notion that elders will not be responsive to the suggestion that youth and women interests should be more equally prioritised.

## 7. Rapid Appraisal of *Lisan* in Recent Peace Initiatives

This rapid appraisal of post-crisis government peace initiatives will briefly highlight the opinions and perceptions of research participants regarding the outcomes of Simu Malu and the National Dialogue Process at community level thus far, in relation to the role of *lisan*. It will not discuss any logistical or practical shortfalls of the programs if not directly related to customary practice.

### 7.1 Simu Malu Rapid Appraisal of *Lisan* Implementation

The Simu Malu Program (literally meaning: mutual acceptance) is a joint agency initiative developed as a response to the humanitarian crisis that emerged in May 2006. The program is officially sponsored under the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion (MTRC) with the following objectives:

- Community reintegration, specifically targeting the return of IDPs to their former communities;
- Promotion of dialogue and discussion between IDPs and their home community;
- Creation of a sense of friendships between *aldeias* [villages] and within refugee centres.;
- Addressing the *Loromonu – Lorosa'e* divide.

<sup>100</sup> Interviews – Various district level traditional leaders,

<sup>101</sup> Interview – Timorese intellectual, Dili, February 2007



## An innovative Design

The initial design and implementation strategy of Simu Malu represented a novel approach to the complex scenario that quickly escalated throughout mid-2006, leaving thousand of residents in congested IDP camps. The program's blueprints accounted for the use of community and grassroots level activities, by using the *Conselho de Suco* [Councillors] and *Chefe de Aldeias* [Village Heads],<sup>102</sup> and it anticipated the use of *lisan* practice in various modalities throughout its implementation.<sup>103</sup>

The original concept, as understood by community members and the staff of Simu Malu, was overall seen as a positive step in the right direction. Regardless of social status, community members appeared to appreciate the Government's concerted effort to tackle the problems created in the wake of May's violence by acknowledging traditional concepts and roles.<sup>104</sup> Expert staffs' opinions also viewed an implementation plan that would use customary understandings and activities as a proactive strategy.<sup>105</sup> The optimism that the original Simu Malu design espoused is a crucial signal to the broad support for the incorporation of *lisan* and traditional roles in modern peace initiatives. However, pessimism and outright negativity towards the 'actual' implementation of the Simu Malu strategy have overshadowed this innovative and potentially effective approach.

## Not enough visible outcomes

Almost all participants stressed that there have been no 'real outcomes'<sup>106</sup> or constructive impacts on society from Simu Malu. In summarising the main reasons for this, respondents mentioned: a lack of resources, a lack of clear roles and a lack of balanced priorities. Beginning with a lack of resources, most participants noted that *lisan* had been effectively cut out of Simu Malu. Not enough financial and educational resources were diverted to enabling the meaningful participation of traditional leaders, i.e. elders and *chefes*. The outcome has therefore marginalised one of the prime avenues for dialogue and grassroots interaction between the government and community stakeholders. The lack of resources has also discouraged the use of any *lisan* ceremonies, which could have reaffirmed and enforced relationships amongst disputing parties.

## Unclear roles and responsibilities & lack of information

Also, poorly outlined roles and responsibilities for traditional elders and *Chefe de Sucos* [councillors] has hampered the implementation of Simu Malu activities. While these community positions contain a vested authority and legitimacy, they were rendered unproductive without specific tasks and clear roles. Another angle to this issue was the role the community as a whole played in Simu Malu. When asked about Simu Malu, some informants simply stated that they had no knowledge or opinions on the initiative. It appeared that Simu Malu's focus on Dili had neglected the dissemination of information to the districts, consequently losing a vital constituency. It was mentioned that in the districts, *lisan* and traditional elders commanded the most respect and authority, and Simu Malu lost a valuable opportunity to be associated with these elements, which could have helped pressure community members in Dili to discuss and resolve issues.

<sup>102</sup> "Assessment, Return and (Re)Integration: A Comprehensive Approach for Timor-Leste." The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and BELUN (2006)

<sup>103</sup> "Simu Malu in Action: Tools, Roles and Responsibilities." 1 - 5: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and BELUN (2006)

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Timorese intellect, Dili, February 2007

<sup>105</sup> Interview, Simu Malu staff, Dili, February 2007

<sup>106</sup> Interview, Timorese intellect, February and April 2007



## Short-term priorities over long-term vision

Lastly, ill-balanced priorities appeared to be the most important limitation mentioned by staff and community members. Most interview participants said that too much attention had been diverted to addressing the immediate needs of IDPs, instead of asking the fundamental question: 'why are the IDPs here to begin with?'<sup>107</sup> While no one implied that the needs of the IDPs are of little consequence, participants suggested that long-term objectives were being isolated from the programs activities. Sidelineing long-term relationship building activities, in their opinion has impacted negatively on the peace program. Participants noted that customary practices, such as *juramentu* and *nahe biti*, are essentially relationship-building projects that require a significant investment of time and support, but prevent violence from recurring in the long run.

## 7.2 Low-Level National Dialogue Rapid Appraisal of Lisan Implementation<sup>108</sup>

The Low-Level National Dialogue (ND) project was defined as a participatory dialogue at community level. Its main objective was the stop *bairo* [suburb] violence, engender a sense of trust, create a mechanism to promote dialogue and empower the youth movement. The ND program's approach broke down the dialogue process into component sessions aimed at the identification of causes, consequences and lessons learned as they related to the communal conflict in 2006.

Paralleling the Simu Malu program, the ND represented a novel approach to overcoming complex communal violence. In theory, the concept was meant to clear and transform communal misperceptions by facilitating direct communication and action between relevant stakeholders. However, it also failed during its implementation in that it did not enable meaningful engagement between conflicting strata of society. It was also limited in terms of its ability to incorporate traditional practices. Once data collection on the ND began, it became evident that the ND was limited by two fundamental problems. Firstly, there was very little documentation of the various dialogue groups that took place at local level and, secondly, there was no use of customary ceremonies, practices or figures of authority.

The outcomes of the ND at the low-level were non-existent when it comes to the idea at the core of traditional conflict resolution: creating harmony, reconciliation and unity. Instead, the output of the dialogue processes was a list of contributing factors and consequences to the current crisis, followed up by a series of solutions, recommendations and lessons learned. However, these initial recommendations were not expanded on in pragmatic terms; and they did not give participants the opportunity to take action into their own hands.<sup>109</sup> The actual way in which dialogue was facilitated misplaced its emphasis on holding a conference for intellectual discussion, instead of using the opportunity for a conflict resolution process.

Numerous participants and ND commission members had asked that *lisan* be incorporated into the design of the ND. As a minimum, it was requested that a *juramentu* ceremony close each dialogue session in order to create a lasting social order, a symbolic gesture that would affirm ancestral support behind dialogue conclusions. However, the lack of project funding limited the resources that could be used to facilitate ceremonies and conduct them accordingly. Inevitably, *juramentus* were not employed because there was a fear that if performed improperly, ancestors would be offended.<sup>110</sup>

The overall program also missed an opportunity to allow the younger urban generation to experience *lisan* practices. If elders had been invited to perform *juramentu* as had been requested, they could have left a lasting impression on the urban youth. Many research

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<sup>107</sup> TV airing, TVTL, Nov – Dec 2006

<sup>108</sup> Interview, Timorese intellectual, Dili, February 2007 and "*Manual for Community Level Dialogue*" edited by Secretario do Dialogo Nacional: Government East Timor, 2006.

<sup>109</sup> *Further information – National Dialogue – To Overcome the Crisis*. President's Office, August 2006

<sup>110</sup> Interview, East Timorese intellectual, Dili, April 2007



participants stressed the lack of knowledge and understanding of *lisan* in Dili, especially among the youth. The ND should have used the occasion for traditional elders and youth to interact, engage with and debate the meaning and use of culture and traditions.

In popular opinion, both recent state-sponsored peace programs have failed to adequately impact on the underlying tensions between *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*. The conflict still continues, and the IDPs are still afraid to return to their homes. Animosities and grievances between *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* have not been resolved. People spoke of a sense of 'half-hearted commitments' and insensitivities in how the events were facilitated. Many of the cited reasons for the failures were directed at both, the methodological approach and epistemological foundation adopted by program organisers. These concerns are specifically relevant to the dialogue-based peace programs that Government had initiated because it was not considered that these initiatives fundamentally needed to foster shared meaning, understanding and the (re)formulation, acceptance and internalisation of communal norms in times of change and turbulence.

In addition to operational shortfalls, both programs missed the opportunity to integrate elements of *lisan* in meaningful and appropriate ways at various stages. For example, a successful 'blended' methodology for community reconciliation exists, developed by the CAVR/CRP [Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation/Community Reconciliation Process]<sup>111</sup> that could have been used to address the *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* issue and re-integrate IDPs to their former communities. But this was not integrated or used. Future conflict transformation programs need to pay attention to the preliminary and posterior components needed to integrate elements of *lisan*. This includes preparation of communities, finding out what processes make sense to them and consulting them in what is about to happen, why it should happen, how it can work and who will be involved. It also involves consultation with traditional leaders and the selection of accepted representatives from their side.

The conceptions of time and timing in *lisan* that may run counter to conventional project cycle management timeframes need to be considered and planned for. This also means thought has to be given to flexible and adequate ways of funding the implementation of processes, including ceremonies.

## 8. Using Traditional Mechanisms to build peace among *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*

To address the *Lorosa'e-Loromonu* conflict with a long-term vision for peace in East Timor, what seems needed is a new national peace process aimed at creating a foundation to transform the current trend towards division. Respondents longed for a shared sense that the *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* conflict is being resolved and its recurrence in the future prevented, so that IDPs can voluntarily return to their homes. Truly transforming the *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* conflict also means that national unity is strengthened and a new national identity formation process enables the East Timorese to express their own cultural values in the modern nation-building process.

To achieve the above, the following should be ensured:

- The final decision must be accepted by both conflicting parties of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* people. In another word, the solution must be legitimate from an East Timorese point of view and the solution process or program should emphasise that Timorese problems are resolved by the Timorese in their own way by ensuring active community participation and ownership of such processes.
- After short term goals are achieved, the recurrence of the same conflict should be prevented in future through a long-term strategy. The long-term strategy should aim

<sup>111</sup> See 'Chega!' CAVR (2005)



at new national identity formation based on East Timorese culture and on traditional and local values and practices in order to secure national unity and build structures and processes well-suited to manage future social conflicts.

The following recommendations on how to achieve the above are based on suggestions by the interviewees. The recommendations are in the short-term

- a National Peace Campaign across the country;
  - performing of a National *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* [traditional dialogue practice];
  - performing of a National *Juramentu* [blood oath to seal a peace agreement];
- and in the long-term
- the construction of a National *Uma Lulik* [sacred house]; and
  - the creation of a National *Sasan Lulik* [sacred objects].

## 8.1 Short-Term Strategy to address the Lorosa'e - Loromonu Conflict

This study revealed that, *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* is seen by the local population as a possible approach to overcome the *Lorosa'e and Loromonu* divide. *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* was repeatedly mentioned by research participants, regardless of age, social status or gender as the most appropriate modality to dissolve the tension that exists between East Timorese. From the study results we conclude that the familiarity and confidence the local population has with *nahe biti bo'ot* is a clear indication that future peace initiatives would benefit greatly from the grassroots acceptance that may be secured through its use.

Based on supportive testimonials, we recommend the use of a national level *nahe biti bo'ot* to facilitate peace and unity negotiations between *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e* representatives.

A short-term strategy aimed at transforming the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict could centre on a nation-wide process of *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* and a National *Juramentu*. At the same time, a program should lay down the foundation for longer-term plans for the construction of a National *Uma Lulik* and the ritualising of certain national symbols (national constitution, official flag and a newly designed national *Rota* [staff]) as national *sasan lulik* [sacred objects]. While many respondents stressed that *Nahe Biti* is the way to resolve the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict, they also mentioned that, to overcome the current crisis, the elite leaders and politician need to find ways of resolving their own internal political divisions.

### 8.1.1 A National Nahe Biti Bo'ot

'*Nahe Biti Bo'ot* just at Government Level [between leaders] will not resolve anything. If we restore our independence, we need to restore our national unity as well. Otherwise, we will fight each other all the time.'

<sup>112</sup>

Traditionally, *Nahe Biti* is conducted to end conflicts on minor issues between two individuals within a family or clan. But when it comes to communal conflict or serious 'wrong-doings', then the *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* is applied. A key advantage of *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* in resolving conflict is its flexibility to suit the circumstances surrounding each dispute. While the goal of *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* - assuring peace - remains stable, the particular rules and processes involved change according to the immediate demands of the conflicting parties and the situation. This flexibility allows *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* to accommodate disputes of differing size and scope, including expanding its usage to national level.

<sup>112</sup> Interview, *Lia Nain*, Ainaro, April 2007



## 8.1.2 A National Juramentu (Blood Oath)

According to *lisan*, after a serious dispute is negotiated and settlement is achieved through *Nahe Biti Bo'ot*, the only way to ensure that agreements are upheld is through a *juramentu*. The ceremony is meant to seal differences and prevent the recurrence of the same conflict in the future by a binding ancestral oath between parties. The *juramentu*'s completion establishes a new order that facilitates peace across generations and ensures loyalty. Research participants noted that upon completion of the national *juramentu*, a new social relationship based on respect and solidarity could be established in a sustainable manner because of the ancestral authority supporting the oath.

## 8.2 Foundations for a Long-Term Strategy to prevent future conflict

### 8.2.1 The Process of National Uma Lulik Construction

'If we do not have an *uma lulik* there will be disorder, people will not know who is who and what power status or role each person has. It structures the society in order, without it people will be like wild animals. If the National *Uma Lulik* existed, it would be like a tree that shades people from [the divisions of] *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*.' <sup>113</sup>

The importance of the *uma lulik* in relation to the people of East Timor cannot be overstated. The sacred house embodies the ethos of communal unity and the binding relationships between the people, the land and their ancestry. Faced with the current challenge of regional divisions and mistrust, we recommend a reflection upon the qualities inherent in the *uma lulik* and the integration of its use into a long-term peace and solidarity strategy.

This study revealed that participants readily identify themselves with their founding *uma lulik* and view it as a necessary component of their identity as East Timorese. Their sentiments are best summarised with the thoughts of a *lia nain*: 'If you don't have an *uma lulik* or *uma lisan*'<sup>114</sup>, you cannot live in East Timor, you will be seen as wanderer or a person with no roots (*abut laiha*). The function of a National *uma lulik* will be to unite the people of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* and ensure a space for peace where people can have faith in one another. The power of the *uma lulik* is such that under its shadow, individuals from different clans can identify themselves as brothers and sisters. With this in mind, the sense of unity it fosters can act to dispel the current conflict.

Participants emphasised that the sacred house ensures that the national community remains cohesive. They described the *uma lulik* as being a depository of East Timorese morality and values, a foundation from which the community grows and the keystone to social relationships that lead to harmony, peace, tranquillity and a sense of hope.<sup>115</sup> Lastly, many participants from both *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e* expressed their belief in one founding ancestor, based on the traditional myth that the people of the whole island of Timor come from one original source and are bound by their origin. The National sacred house will tap into this communal belief by reaffirming the nation's myth of origin in a physical form that all can see.

On the basis of the many positive responses we propose the creation of a National *Uma Lulik* in Dili as a symbol of East Timorese identity and solidarity. The National *Uma Lulik* will be seen as the focal point for local *uma luliks* across the country and the communities that associate with them. The goal of constructing a national level *uma lulik* is to rekindle the process of national unity by establishing a connection between the people at grassroots level. The grassroots connections will be founded on a symbiotic relationship between local sacred houses and the National *Uma Lulik*, essentially making one house under which all

<sup>113</sup> Interview, Dato, Viqueque, March 2007

<sup>114</sup> The meaning of *Uma Lulik*, *Uma Lisan* and *Uma Fukun* [all are sacred houses] still open to debate. *Lorosa'e* people call their sacred houses *Uma Lulik* while in the middle and western region; people refer to *Uma Lisan*, *Uma Lulik*, or *Uma Fukun*.

<sup>115</sup> Interview, Youth, Aileu, April 2007



East Timorese live. Under this base of unity, individuals will be able to relate to each other as family regardless of regional affiliation or ethnicity. A National *Uma Lulik* will also enforce a sense of responsibility to the greater community of East Timor, paralleling the notion of a social contract.

The completed National *Uma Lulik* will have the following crucial functions:

- A venue to balance the flow of values between foreign (modern) and local (traditional) to ensure the East Timorese world view is alive and respected.
- The building will represent peace, national unity and the national identity of the East Timorese.
- It will act as lasting remainder of the identity crisis and its end, in order to prevent the recurrence of the conflict.
- It will symbolise the idea of multiculturalism under the ethos of '*diversity under one house*'.
- It will also enable the East Timorese to understand and imagine East Timor as one nation.
- It will be a sacred place to store National *Sasan Luliks* <sup>116</sup>
- It will symbolise Timorese culture and tradition, and create a space for its preservation and development.
- It will be a venue to ritualise the elected President and the Prime Minister.
- It will be venue for the proposed National *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* and the swearing of a *Juramentu* (blood oath) to symbolise the end of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* divisions and for future ceremonies.

Traditional leaders should decide on the design of the National *Uma Lulik*. It should represent the entirety of the country's rich cultural diversity. <sup>117</sup> The design should take into account the unique character of the people in each region and incorporate elements that symbolise peace and prosperity. Materials for the construction should be gathered in traditional fashion from each region of East Timor and transported outside of Dili, to be further ceremonially brought to the chosen location.

The process of constructing an *uma lulik* in East Timorese tradition is, at its core, a community-building action. It is undertaken by community members and strengthens relationships through mutual interaction. Symbolically, the construction reminds the community of its collective responsibility to each individual, to the family and to the clan within a kingdom. The process itself is interpreted as holy because of its importance in shaping and ensuring the roles and responsibilities of each unit in the community as they were defined by ancestry. The rituals and ceremonies taking place alongside the construction underpin *bandu* [traditional rules and prohibitions] and reaffirm adherence to them.

The National *Uma Lulik* construction parallels a community process at national level. The process moves from a community-building action to a nation-building action, the *uma* symbolising the nation-state itself. The relevant community members connected to its construction should be representative of all the main *uma luliks* across the country. Their interactions will represent a nation-wide unity and sense of cooperation. When completed the *uma* will signify the construction of re-strengthened nation achieved through the people

<sup>116</sup> A national *Rota*, a copy of the constitution and the national flag.

<sup>117</sup> In relation to a National *Uma Lulik* design a youth from Covalima described the following: 'We know that we have diverse culture with different *Uma Luliks*. We need to combine all symbols for the design of the National *Uma Lulik*. If we only chose design from a particular *Uma Lulik*, people might think it only belong to certain people from *Lorosa'e* or *Loromonu*. But if the design represents all *Uma Lulik* symbols, then all Timorese will feel a sense of ownership to it.' Interview, Youth/Women, Suai, 2007.



themselves. This symbolic gesture is vital to creating a foundation of harmony and a culture of peace.

## 8.2.2 Creating National Sasan Lulik

As in the traditional local *uma luliks*, the National *Uma Lulik* should contain its own National *Sasan Luliks* (NSL) to establish legitimacy and link it to the entire nation. After questioning numerous *lia nain* and *liurai*, they identified three objects that may acts as NSL and create a binding link between the *uma*, the spiritual world and the nation. A copy of the national constitution<sup>118</sup>, the official flag<sup>119</sup> and a newly created *rota* [ruler's rattan stick]<sup>120</sup> should be inaugurated as NSL.

Respondents stressed that there was a need for a National *Rota* to be kept within the National *Uma Lulik*.<sup>121</sup> It will represent the unity of the different *uma luliks* and the elevated position of the National *Uma Lulik*. The *Rota* in turn, will be held by the elected President and symbolise his power and legitimacy to govern the people of the land as in the traditional political system.

Elders pointed out that to become NSL the objects must go through a ceremonial process.<sup>122</sup>

They suggested the items be carried across the country, visiting every main *uma lulik* to receive a blessing from ritual leaders. During this period, each *uma lulik* should symbolically invest or transfer some of its authority and its legitimacy to the NSL though traditional rituals.<sup>123</sup> This repeated procedure will be seen as a national peace and rapprochement process to dispel the sentiment of an *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu* conflict. Once this process is completed, the entire population will consider the NSL as sacred.

<sup>118</sup> Before a copy of the National Constitution is placed inside the National *Uma Lulik*, it was suggested by various respondents to be revised to suit the needs of the Timorese people. The idea of National *Uma Lulik* and the NSL should be included in the constitution via an amendment.

<sup>119</sup> At least two respondents stressed that, the current official flag was chosen from the flag of resistance, FRETILIN. There is an older flag that was used in traditional *uma luliks* to rule the land and the people. The flag has number 18 in the middle, and this cultural flag was used throughout the territory in every main *uma lulik*.

<sup>120</sup> Traditional leaders will decide if it is necessary to create a National *Rota*

<sup>121</sup> The idea of *Rota* to symbolize political power and legitimacy was introduced by the Portuguese during its occupation in East Timor. There are two types of *Rota* in Timorese *uma luliks* at present, the Monarch *Rota* and the newer Republic *Rota*. Contemporary Timorese treat the *Rota* as one of the important *sasan luliks* as it is seen to be passed down from ancestry and contain political authority.

<sup>122</sup> A Dato from Baucau supported the NSL concept and suggested the inclusion of the constitution as a possible *rota*: 'The National *Rota* is a very good idea [...], but we need the Constitution [to be amended] to back this up. [...] Whoever is elected as president should hold the *Rota*. This will give him power to rule and legitimacy of political power – as this is like the traditional structure. [...] If we know our culture and use it for the good of the people it will create a strong unity amongst the Timorese.' Interview, *Dato*, ex-local Parliament member, Baucau, March 2007.

<sup>123</sup> Each *uma lulik* must undertake a *Hamulak* (traditional prayer) to the spirit of the land and the spirit of the ancestors to invest their power and legitimacy into the NSL.



## 9. Conclusion

‘The *Lorosa’e – Loromonu* conflict in Dili makes me sad. When I heard someone died, I was very sad, everybody was unhappy about it. We don’t contribute to the *Lorosa’e – Loromonu* separation. We feel we are still close to each other. So when you come back to invite us to talk on *Nahe Biti* on the chosen day, we are ready. Not to divide the people again, but we will make the ties in unity stronger.’<sup>124</sup>

The East Timorese struggle for independence was rooted in the potential for solidarity and commitment of the people of the country. Years of sacrifice and suffering attest to the unified sense of ‘one nation’, which motivated the population to armed rebellion and resistance. Unfortunately, the sense of national cohesion has weakened over the course of the last year to the point where mistrust and violence prevail. Further large-scale social division may mean disaster for future progress and development of East Timor.

While various proposed solutions to transforming the divide have focused attention on tangible outputs such as economic or legal improvements, now is the time to put more effort into strengthening the weak sense of national unity.

Since the traditional elements of *lisan* and the spiritual-material view of the world continue to shape the conceptual framework of the East Timorese regardless of ethno-linguistic or geographic backgrounds, they represent a starting point for creating a sense of solidarity for the nation. Based on interviewees’ responses across East Timor, we believe that the solution to the crisis lies within East Timorese culture and traditions.

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<sup>124</sup> Interview, *Liurai*, Aileu, April 2007



## **Annex 1:**

### **The Proposal**

#### **A. Strengthening National Unity - New National Peace Project**

Central to the recommendations in this report is the assumption that “**the solution to Timorese problems is in the hands of the Timorese themselves**”. Fundamental to the success of this strategy, and to its long-term effectiveness in restoring social cohesion and order, is its conception of a national peace process enlisting the support and the authority of customary leaders. With this in mind this proposal does not specify structures for project management and implementation but instead focuses on principles and guidelines that should underpin such a process. If undertaken the structures and organization of this strategy will have to be developed by a steering committee established under the auspices of the Government. Such a committee will obviously require participation from as broad a cross-section of Timorese society as possible

##### **A.1 Overall Goals of National Peace Project**

The overall goal of the National Peace Process is: *To repair the bonds of social cohesion between people of Lorosa'e and Loromonu at national and communal levels thus preventing the recurrence of Lorosa'e – Loromonu conflict in the future. This is to be achieved by strengthening national unity through appropriate consideration of identity, culture and tradition.*

These goals will be undertaken through a national peace process that has at its heart, existing traditional practices, which embody concepts of reintegration, unification and peace building. This process will address the damage and divisions inflicted on the country and its people and create a new foundation from which the Government and its people can move forward together.

##### **A.2 Overall Objectives of the National Peace Project:**

- To encourage and *empower* people to provide their own solutions to end the current crisis.
- To *restore trust* and *rebuild relationships* between the people of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* and their Government
- To strengthen the sense of a Timorese *national identity* as a unifying, inclusive force that celebrates the differences of the different groups involved yet identifies shared values and goals
- To *raise awareness of traditional values* and morality, thus reminding people of their collective responsibilities and the importance of mutual respect
- To engender a deeper understanding and *inclusion of Timorese culture* and traditions so that they can be preserved and invigorated for generations to come, and so that it can be harnessed for peace building purposes.

The above goals and objectives will be achieved through the use of the following traditional elements:

- National Peace Campaign across the country
- Construction of a National *Uma Lulik*
- Creation of a National *Sasan Luliks*
- Performing of a National *Nahe Biti Bo'ot*
- Performing of a National *Juramentu*



### A.3 National Peace Project Limitations

This new national peace project does not pretend to provide answers or a solution to all the contributing factors that fed into the *Loromonu - Lorosa'e* crisis. Different strategies must be implemented to tackle other outstanding issues. Rather, this project intends to create a foundation of understanding, through the use of culture and tradition, between the people of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* and their Government. The Government may subsequently use this foundation to launch other programs aimed at ameliorating coinciding and contributing problems, such as justice, security and resettlement.

### A.4 Implementation Strategy

This national peace project is composed of four stages. Each stage tackles different problems aiming at overcoming the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* divide by re-strengthening national unity through culture and tradition, and strengthening Timorese identity. The four main stages are as follows:

#### A.4.1 Peace Campaign by carrying the identified Sasan Luliks across the Country

##### Visiting Every Main Uma Luliks and Conduct “Halot Meit ho Kroat”<sup>125</sup>

###### The Goal

The goal of this stage is to raise community awareness and secure community participation in the national peace project. This will be accomplished by selecting the National *Sasan Luliks* (NSL) and carrying them to main regional *Uma Luliks* to receive blessings. The ritual blessing and the transfer of traditional power and authority to the NSL will ensure that the national peace project has the legitimacy to continue on to subsequent stages using *Lisan*. The *Halot Meit ho Kroat* ritual will facilitate the return of the distributed *Lulik* Power to its original *Uma Lulik*.

###### Planned Activities

###### 1. Meeting of Traditional Leaders to Discuss NSL

Numerous meetings will be required to enable traditional leaders or their representatives to discuss and identify NSL. The idea of using the National Flag and the Constitution as NSL items should be introduced prior to meetings to allow for personal consultation amongst elders. At the first meeting, the National *Rota* concept should be discussed and decided upon. Each district should send representatives of traditional authorities and community representatives, amongst whom women will be encouraged to participate.

###### 2. Creation and Design of NSL

If traditional leaders accept the proposal of National *Rota*, negotiation for its physical design should begin immediately. At this juncture, the design for a National Flag and Constitution should commence if they are selected to become NSL.

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<sup>125</sup> The name “*Halot Meit ho Kroat*” originated from one of the program initiated by President Xanana Gusmao, where the president went to several main *Uma Luliks* and conduct the rituals with the traditional elders.



### 3. Peace Rally with NSL and “*Halot Meit ho Kroa*” Ceremony

Upon selecting and procuring the NSL, an opening ceremony to launch the peace rally should be organized. Information regarding the timetable and route of the ceremony should be distributed to all districts and sub-districts. The route should include every main *Uma Lulik* in each district, including Oecussi.

At each *Uma Lulik*, local *Lia Nains* will be tasked with conducting a ritual to ensure that the traditional power, authority and legitimacy vested within the *Uma* is transferred to the NSL. A *Hamulak* prayer asking for peace, unity and prosperity between the people of *Loromonu* and *Lorosa’e* should follow. At this moment, any unreturned *Lulik power* that had been given to FALENTIL and resistance fighters during the independence war should be given back to their respective *Uma Luliks*. This procedure must be completed, addressing the outstanding socio-cosmic imbalance left over from the resistance fighters deaths, before new ceremonial procedures initiate.

Local communities should contribute materials, food or labor if possible for the ceremony, as is customary in Timorese tradition. Beetle nut from each community area should be collected and used according to *Lisan* at each *Uma* location. Contributions from the community will provide an opportunity for interaction and relationship building, and enable the local people to feel that they have directly participated in the national event.

This process should be repeated at every designated *Uma Lulik* stop. The final location will be Dili, where the National *Uma Lulik* will be built and the National *Juramentu* will be conducted. The National *Uma Lulik* will be the final resting place for the NSL.

#### **A.4.2 Construction of National *Uma Lulik***

##### The Goal

The goal of constructing a National *Uma Lulik* is the creation of a physical and spiritual symbol for unity and peace based on the culture, traditions and identity of East Timor. The site shall also act as a lasting vestige of the *Loromonu – Lorosa’e* conflict; it will be a permanent reminder that Timorese must remain united through their culture and traditions.

##### Planned Activities

#### 1. Gathering of Materials

Traditionally used raw materials need to be collected from each of the 13 districts. The material should be transported and unloaded at a designated site outside of Dili. On the chosen day, all the materials should be transported through Dili to the chosen *Uma Lulik* site in ceremonial procession.

#### 2. Construction of National *Uma Lulik*

Representatives from the 13 districts shall construct the National *Uma Lulik*.



### **A.4.3 Inauguration of the Newly Built National Uma Lulik Where Nahe Biti and Juramentu Ceremony take Place**

#### The Goal

To create a binding oath that help transforms the division between *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e* into a united people. The ceremony will restore a feeling of solidarity amongst the people of East Timor and prevent regional animosities from recurring through the authority of *Juramentu*.

#### Planned Activities

##### 1. Inauguration of the National *Uma Lulik*

13 traditional leader(s), the President of East Timor and a Church representative should carry out a public inauguration of the National *Uma Lulik*.

##### 2. Reading "Myth of Origin" from different *Uma Luliks*

After the inauguration, representative *Lia Nains* from different regions who are knowledgeable about the Timorese "Myth of Origin" should recount the story to the public. It is encouraged that *Lia Nains* use the myth that is particular to their home regions, yet highlight the aspect of myth that Timorese have one founding ancestor deriving from one *Uma Lulik*. The National *Uma Lulik* will then be presented as the embodiment of the founding *Uma*.

##### 3. The National *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* Ceremony

It is recommended that the National *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* ceremony take place after the inauguration. The actual National *Nahe Biti Bo'ot* event should focus on the feelings of animosity and mistrust between the people of *Loromonu* and *Lorosa'e*. If possible the individuals who have come to represent the divide, such as the F-FDTL Petitioners<sup>126</sup>, should be invited to partake and openly express their grievances to traditional elders.<sup>127</sup> Any outstanding issues, which cannot be resolved, should further be directed to the Government and its formal judicial sector

##### 4. The National *Juramentu* Ceremony

The National *Juramentu* will be conducted following the *Nahe Biti* ceremony. Participants for the *Juramentu* should include, but not limited to: representatives of the main *Uma Luliks* from *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*, PNTL, F-FDTL, youth and women's organizations, various ethnic minorities, the President, the Prime Minister, and the President of the Parliament.

The oath in the *Juramentu* should read as follows<sup>128</sup>:

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<sup>126</sup> Major Alfredo Rainaldo was also suggested by participants take part in event.

<sup>127</sup> Other participants should be: the President, Prime Minister, Parliament members, President of Parliament, formal judicial practitioners, civil society organizations, church, youth and women's representatives. Timorese lawyers and human right's experts should also conduct monitoring.

<sup>128</sup> This is a suggested template only. The basic principle is that, the oath reflects a commitment or a popular will to have a national unity in peace



We, the people of East Timor, from *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu*, declare from this day forward;

- *The sacred land of East Timor and everything in it is united as one. There shall be no more division between "Lorosa'e" or "Loromonu", nor any other form of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, language, ethnic grouping, sexual orientation, etc...*
- *The words "Lorosa'e" and "Loromonu" and any other words that have come to represent differences between those from the East and those from the West are sacred and cannot be used to divide the country and its people.*
- *Everyone in East Timor is required to work and live together hand in hand and side by side in a peaceful fashion; to enable a better future for everyone, now and for the generations to come.*
- *No one will harbour feelings of vengeance and animosity concerning what has happened in recent times.*
- *The Government of the nation and its institutions will make efforts to bring prosperity and create a better way of life for the people of East Timor.*

A parliament member stressed the idea of prohibit *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict into written law, and whoever breaks this law should be punished by serving social work for the community<sup>129</sup>

#### 5. The National Holy Mass After *Juramentu*

A national mass, led by the two bishops of East Timor, should close the ceremonial event. The theme of the national mass should be 'peace, unity and prosperity for East Timorese'.

#### ***A.4.4 Closing Ceremony/Opening of Cultural Celebrations from the 13 Districts (or representative of Ethno-Linguistic Groups).***

##### The Goal

To afford the people of East Timor an outlet to express their creativity, their regional heritage and their experiences as one nation. To symbolically mark the emergence of a revitalized nation.

##### Planned Activities

An exposition of traditional crafts, art and dance

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<sup>129</sup> Interview, member of Parliament, Dili February 2007



## **A.5 Overall Project Outputs**

### *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict is resolved – IDPs return home voluntarily

Following the national peace project, people should have a sense that, the *Lorosa'e – Loromonu* conflict and animosities is addressed, and the relationship between the two regions is restored. The new sense of security encourages IDPs to return to their homes voluntarily.

### A Fundamental Understanding of Life is Restored: The Socio-Cosmic Order

After National Peace Project is completed, the Timorese will sense that the balance between their ancestral cosmic world and the physical world has achieved more order and harmony.

### The idea of 'Diversity under One House' introduced

The idea of multiculturalism is introduced through 'Diversity under one House'. This principle will be further socialized to the general population. (See Chapter 10)

### National Unity is Strengthened through Culture and Traditions

The regions and ethno-linguistic groupings in East Timor will feel united under the National *Uma Lulik*. The people will sense a solidarity that connects them to their Government, as the NSL will include the National Flag and a copy of the National Constitution. The Government will be perceived as legitimate while it holds the National *Rota*.

### Regional Divisions are Prohibited through Cultural and Spiritual Rules

Future regional divisions and violence is prohibited because the National *Juramentu* has established a new cosmic order with ancestral enforcement.

### East Timorese Culture and Traditions are acknowledged

The cultural celebration at the finale of the peace project will signify a nation-wide appreciation and acknowledgement of the importance of Timorese culture and tradition.



## B. Summary of Long Term Strategy

After completion of the National Peace Project, a long-term strategy needs to be developed to ensure that peace is sustainable. The following framework for a strategy is recommended with an understanding that more research and consultation will be needed to develop a specific action plan for each suggested point:

### Formalize the National *Uma Lulik* and *Sasan Lulik*

It is recommended that the principals of the National *Uma Lulik* and National *Sasan Luliks* are formalized by incorporating them into the National Constitution. This action will unite two institutions, the traditional and the formal, that have been seen as mutually exclusive up until now.

### Ritualize Elected Leaders in the National *Uma Lulik*

In order to overcome the dichotomy of legitimacy between the population that understands leadership through either a traditional understanding or through formal legislation, it is recommended that elected leaders are ritualized under the shadow of the National *Uma Lulik*.<sup>130</sup> By performing this action, a sense of balance between the two institutes may be achieved and ultimately increase the authority and unity attached to political roles.

### Socialization of “Myth of Origin”

The ‘myth of origin’ from various *Uma Luliks* and regions should be documented and distributed across the country for absorption by the general population. Specific attention should be focused on the younger generation having knowledge about their ‘roots’ and the genesis of East Timor.

### Rebuild the Main *Uma Luliks*

It is recommended that the Government use this as an opportunity to restore the spiritual hearth of these communities, by sponsoring and supporting *Uma* reconstructions. This will also strengthen the bond and trust between grassroots stakeholders and the Government. Numerous study respondents stated their concern for the destroyed *Uma Luliks* across the country, leftover from the independence struggle. Due to economic reasons many of these have not been reconstructed. This symbolically represents an imbalance in the socio-cosmic order.

### Multiculturalism - Diversity Under One House

In the end of the national peace project, a strategy needs to be developed to socialize and internalize the idea of multiculturalism in East Timor through civic education and outreach programs. Campaigning can base its foundation on the ethos of the National *Uma Lulik* - ‘Diversity under One House’. It is also recommended that the idea of democracy and tolerance be linked to the National *Uma Lulik*. Particular identity categories that should be addressed are:

- Ethno-Linguistic Groups
- Ethnic Groups
- Political Party Affiliation
- Religious Affiliation

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<sup>130</sup> *Liurais* are believed to have the legitimacy to rule the land and the people based on ancestry. Representatives of three *Liurai* from *Rai Ulun*, *Rai Klaran* and *Rai Ikun* have to put their hand on the elected president to symbolize that the legitimacy from the ancestry and the spirit of the land has been transferred to the elected president.



### Further Research

Research should be continued to examine how communities throughout East Timor understand and respond to communal conflict. Attention to the following areas is recommended:

- Communal identity formation
- Impact of modernisation on village level conflict management capacities
- Regional differences in *Lisan* and communal justice



## Annex 2: Glossary of Terms

<b>Abut Laiha:</b>	No roots, refer to the Timorese who did not have relative or those who left their traditions
<b>Adat:</b>	(Indonesian) Custom
<b>Babeur:</b>	Disturbances/curse from the ancestor/spirit
<b>Bairo:</b>	Suburb
<b>Bandu:</b>	Rules and prohibitions set by the ancestor; traditional law or morale
<b>Biru:</b>	Lulik Power (Timorese magic)
<b>Bunak:</b>	Ethno-Linguistic group in western region of East Timor (Bobonaro area)
<b>Chefe de Aldeia:</b>	Chief of Village
<b>Chefe de Suco:</b>	District Head (Local Government)
<b>Conselho de Suco:</b>	Local Government Councillor
<b>Dato:</b>	Traditional Ritual Authority
<b>Funu:</b>	War
<b>Hamulak:</b>	Traditional Prayer
<b>Halot Meit ho Kroat:</b>	Return Sharp Materials
<b>Juramentu:</b>	Blood Oath
<b>Kemak:</b>	Ethno-Linguistic group in the western part of East Timor
<b>Lia Nain:</b>	Keeper of the Words. Traditional Judicial Authority
<b>Lisan:</b>	Custom/Tradition
<b>Liurai:</b>	King or Head of Domain/Kingdom
<b>Loromonu:</b>	Sun Sets, Refers to Western Districts
<b>Lorosa'e:</b>	Sun Rise. Refers to Eastern Districts
<b>Lulik:</b>	Sacred
<b>Makassae:</b>	Ethnic grouping and also small geographical part of East Timor
<b>Mamah Bua Malus:</b>	To chew Betel-Nut
<b>Mambai:</b>	Largest Ethno-Linguistic group dominating western to central part of East Timor



<b>Matebian:</b>	Martyrs (People who died during the war)
<b>Nahe Biti:</b>	Spreading the Mat
<b>Nucleos de resistencia popular:</b>	Cells of popular resistance
<b>Pancasila:</b>	Five Principles
<b>Rai Ikun:</b>	Western part of East Timor
<b>Rai Klaran:</b>	Middle part of East Timor
<b>Rai Lulik Timor:</b>	The sacred Land of Timor
<b>Rai Ulun:</b>	Eastern part of East Timor
<b>Rota:</b>	Rattan Stick
<b>Sasan Lulik:</b>	Sacred Object
<b>Simu Malu:</b>	Mutual Acceptance (also a Government programme)
<b>Tetum Terik:</b>	Ethno-Linguistic group in the central southern coastal of East Timor
<b>Uma:</b>	House
<b>Uma Lulik:</b>	Scared House



## **Annex 3: Interview Questions**

### **General Question (for Dili):**

1. What is your opinion on the current crisis? (Causes and Impact)
2. What is the solution to remove East – West divide?
3. Do you think the traditional leaders and traditional conflict resolution techniques still have an influence? Specifically on young people?
4. What do you think about Simu Malu and National Dialogue from president's Office?
5. Do you think these two programs will bring and end to the current crisis?
6. Do you think traditional method of conflict resolution will complement Simu Malu program? (Nahe Biti Bo'ot and Juramentu)

### **Specific Question to East – West Cleavage Study (for district):**

1. What is your opinion on regional divisions in relation to:
  - a. Current crisis?
  - b. Has this changed overtime? (Is there a history to it?)
  - c. Do you think a solution is necessary?
2. How would you dispel the East – West Divide?
  - a. Formal
  - b. Traditional
3. Do you think the traditional leaders and traditional conflict resolution still has influence on young people?
4. What your opinion on using the Following to remove the East – West Divide?
  - a. Nahe Biti
  - b. Juramentu
5. What is the function of the Uma Lulik in Timorese tradition? Its function today, if any?
6. What do you think about building a National Uma Lulik to represent Timorese Unity and Identity?
7. What do you think about Simu Malu or National Dialogue program from President's Office?



## **Annex 4 : Participant Composition**

### **Total Participants = 53**

#### **By Region**

Lorosa'e = 27

Loromonu = 23

International = 3

#### **By Profession:**

Lia Nain = 6

Dato/Liurai = 4

MP/Political Leader = 3

Church Representative = 2

Youth = 12

Chefe de Suco = 4

NGO = 5

Teacher = 2

Student = 5

Intellectual = 5

Simu Malu = 3

IDP = 6

#### **By Gender**

Women = 7

Men = 46

#### **By District**

Dili= 17

Baucau= 5

Viqueque = 11

Lautem = 4

Bobonaro = 2

Aileu = 7

Ainaro = 2

Covalima = 5



## Annex 5: List of Interview Participants

No	District	Region	Profesion	Date Interview
1	Aileu	West	Student	19/04/07
2	Aileu	West	Student	19/04/07
3	Aileu	West	Student	19/04/07
4	Aileu	West	Student	19/04/07
5	Aileu	West	Student	19/04/07
6	Aileu	West	Youth/Teacher	19/04/07
7	Ainaro	West	Lia Nain	19/04/07
8	Ainaro	West	Youth/Women	19/04/07
9	Baucau	East	Dato/Liurai	30/03/07
10	Baucau	East	Historian	30/03/07
11	Baucau	East	Chefe de Suco	30/03/07
12	Baucau	East	IDP/Women	30/03/07
13	Bobonaro	West	Youth	4/4/2007
14	Bobonaro	West	Lia Nain	4/4/2007
15	Covalima	West	Lia Nain	20/04/07
16	Covalima	West	Youth	20/04/07
17	Covalima	West	Youth/NGO/Women	20/04/07
18	Covalima	West	Youth/NGO	20/04/07
19	Covalima	West	Teacher	20/04/07
20	Dili	West	Human Rights Lawyer	23/02/07
21	Dili	West	Youth	19/03/07
22	Dili	East	MP	22/02/07
23	Dili	West	PhD, Lawyer and Anthropologist	4/03/2007
24	Dili	East	Phd. Democracy and Social Changes	28/02/07
25	Dili	West	MP, Presid. Candidate	21/02/07
26	Dili	West	MP	23/02/07
27	Dili	East	Dato/Liurai	15/04/07
28	Dili	East	Youth/NGO	27/04/07
29	Dili	East	Church Representative	02/03/07
30	Dili	East	Lawyer	20/02/07
31	Dili	East	Lawyer	21/02/07
32	Dili	West	Simu Malu	22/02/07
33	International		Simu Malu	21/02/07
34	International		NGO staff	16/02/07
35	International		Church, Progesio	28/02/07
36	Lautem	East	Lia Nain	29/03/07
37	Lautem	East	Youth/NGO	29/03/07
38	Lautem	East	IDP/Women	29/03/07
39	Lautem	East	Youth/NGO	20/02/07
40	Viqueque	East	Youth	27/03/07
41	Viqueque	East	Teacher	27/03/07



42	Viqueque	East	Dato/Liurai	28/03/07
43	Viqueque	East	Chefe de Suco	27/03/07
44	Viqueque	East	Lia Nain	28/03/07
45	Viqueque	East	IDP	27/03/07
46	Viqueque	East	IDP	27/03/07
47	Viqueque	East	IDP/Women	30/03/07
48	Viqueque	East	Chefe de Suco	30/03/07
49	Viqueque	East	Lia Nain	28/03/07
50	Viqueque	East	IDP/Women	30/03/07
51	Aileu	West	Dato/Liurai	19/04/07
52	Baucau	East	Chefe do Suco/Youth	30/03/07
53	Dili	West	INGO staff	22/04/07



## Annex 6: Selected Photos



*Picture 1*

*Interview with IDP/Youth, Baucau, March 2007*





Picture 2

*Interview, Lia Nain, Lospalos,*





Picture 3

Interview, IDP/Youth, Viqueque

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